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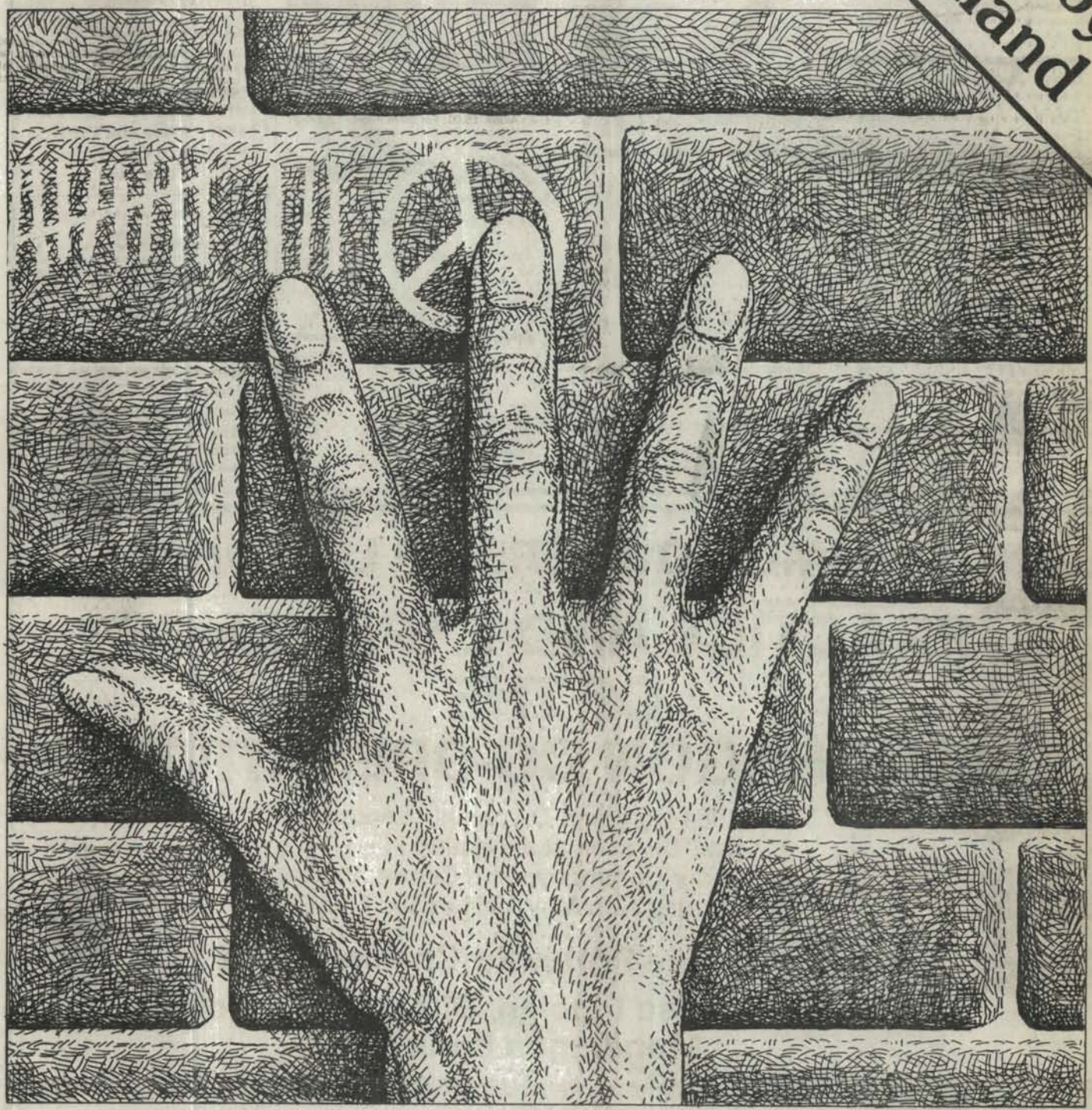

THE PRICE OF PROTEST

Britain's prisoners of conscience

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New Statesman

Vol 107 No 2767 30 March 1984

Creating a climate of fear

IN ALL THE ACRES of newsprint devoted to the Sarah Tisdall affair over the last week, one part of the story was briefly reported in only one newspaper — the *Daily Mail*, to give it its unwonted due. When the *Guardian* first published details of the leaked documents about the timing of the arrival of cruise missiles at Greenham Common, Whitehall security and MI5 did not launch a full-scale leak enquiry. The reason was that they assumed that the 'leak' had come from Mr Heseltine himself.

Every working day of the year there takes place unofficial disclosure of government information by ministers and officials, of a kind that *could* be caught by Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. Just as the decision as to what is a classified document is quite arbitrary and unrelated to genuine questions of national security or national interests, so is the distinction between unauthorised disclosure and a 'legitimate' off the record briefing. The security people in Whitehall had every reason to suspect that the Defence Secretary was once again engaging in a little freelance use of the lobby system.

It happens all the time. It is almost certainly what happened in the case of the other *Guardian* leak — the one which set out weeks in advance a large chunk of what eventually appeared in Mr Lawson's budget speech on 13 March. In any country where these things were handled rationally the problem would never have arisen in the first place, because in other countries budgets are produced openly in draft and examined by legislative committees before being passed into law. But we have the most congenitally secret system of government in any industrial country and every word of what the Chancellor says on budget day is supposed to be a state secret until he says it. So if any Chancellor wants to test reaction to something from public opinion — or even opinion from his own party and Cabinet — he has no option but to arrange for a leak. Given the range of detail that was contained in the *Guardian* pre-budget story, the number of people who could have been the source of the leak is very few — the Chancellor himself and the majority of his ministerial colleagues, the officials in his private office, the permanent secretary and two or three other very senior officials at the most. You can bet a penny to a china orange that, unlike the Tisdall case, the Treasury leak inquiry will run quietly into the sand.

These are only the latest in a continual series of cases which show up the Official Secrets Act as an arbitrary and wholly unsatisfactory piece of legislation. In a symbolic confirmation of the anti-civil liberty caste of her approach to government, the Prime Minister this week reaffirmed that she had no intention of doing anything about the Official Secrets Act. For an administration that is engaged in an attempt to shift British politics radically to the right, beyond the bounds of the post-war political consensus, the Act provides an ideal instrument for creating a climate of fear in Whitehall.

THE GUARDIAN should clearly have destroyed the Tisdall document at an early stage. But that does not remove the grounds for criticising the extraordinary and *political* way in which Sir John Donaldson and his fellow appeal court judges behaved in the *Guardian* case. For the court to hear an appeal on the afternoon of the day on which the High Court's judgement was delivered is evidence of an extraordinary eagerness on the part of the judicial system to fit in with the government's timetable. Even more blatant was the order by the Master of the Rolls and his fellow appeal court judges that, though the *Guardian* could have leave to appeal against its judgement to the House of Lords, it could not keep the document meanwhile. Since the point to be tried was precisely whether or not the *Guardian* was protected from being forced to hand back the document intact by Section 10 of the 1981 Contempt of Court Act (and since by common admission national security was not threatened by the document) legal logic ought to have come to the conclusion that the newspaper could hang on to it until the Lords had ruled. But in that case the police might never have got their hands on the document.

As it was, the Master of the Rolls, by ordering the immediate return of the document, in practice rendered null and void the whole purpose of Section 10 in cases where the government declares that security is involved. Donaldson is known to be an ambitious and politically atuned judge. Mrs Thatcher is known to take into account whether someone 'is on our side' when using her patronage. She will, no doubt, remember the Tisdall case when she decides in due course who to make up to Lord Chancellor in place of Lord Halisham.

Mrs Thatcher will also, no doubt, keep in mind Mr David Hall, the chief constable of Humberside. For by the back door and without any public discussion of the issues involved Mrs Thatcher and two Home Secretaries under her — Whitelaw and Brittan — have sanctioned a major step in the direction of establishing a national police force. The result has been seen on our screens night after night, as massed armies of police from all over the country have held back NUM pickets.

There is no statutory authority whatsoever for the police tactics. It is being run under the cover of the Association of Chief Police Officers, which is a trade union. Mr Hall is its president this year. But to whom is Mr Hall accountable? The Home Secretary is in an unsatisfactory way statutorily responsible for the Metropolitan Police. But what consultation has there been with members of the other 42 police authorities in England and Wales? The answer in effect is none. To whom are the police accountable when they illegally stop miners leaving Kent, or arbitrarily decide what action by pickets they will allow and what forbid. The answer in practice is to no one but themselves.

Civil liberties seldom make easy politics for the Left. The majority of people in the country no doubt think that the *Guardian* should have handed back stolen property and that the police have a right to stop people moving around the country. But the Labour Party and the Left must not duck the issues. The police cannot be allowed to continue on the present trend towards becoming an independent agency within the State. There must be clear and statutory political accountability. And there must be an unequivocal commitment to scrap the existing 1911 Official Secrets Act. □

NEXT WEEK — Spring Books

Forthcoming books list; **Christopher Priest** on the Arts Council's 'plans' for literature; **Phillip Whitehead** on Stephen Koss's *Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain;* **Bernard Crick** on radical rhetoric; **Anne Smith** on Gloria Steinem; **Mervyn Jones** on *The Culture Club*, a debatable view of the arts; **Simon Frith** on George Melly's memoirs; **Sara Maitland** on a new feminist detective novel; **Gary Mead** on Poland's persecution of writers; **Harriett Gilbert** on the week's fiction . . . and much more.

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Dirty cuts as hospitals opt for private cleaning

CROTHALLS, the big private cleaning contractors, are trying to impose drastic cuts in wages and conditions on workers at two NHS hospitals.

At one, Barking Hospital in East London, 90 women domestics are on indefinite strike after being sacked by Crothalls for refusing to accept new contracts. They were given four days to agree to massive cuts in working hours, loss of sick pay benefits, fewer holidays and irregular shifts at all hours of the day and night.

And Tuesday, 80 domestics and other staff forced the Redbridge District Health Authority to abandon a meeting which was about to discuss the Crothalls contract. They refused to leave the meeting when the Authority wanted to discuss the contract in secret.

Meanwhile, there have also been two one-day strikes at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge where Crothalls currently holds the cleaning contract. New tenders are about to be invited by the health authority and the firm, part of the Pritchard Services Group, wants to scrap sections of its existing agreement. These stipulate three domestics on each ward at any one time, and the guaranteeing of longstanding Whitley Council pay and conditions.

Crothalls directly attributes its tough new approach to the government's privitisation policy. The Tories abolished the Fair Wages Regulations last September which formed part of the standing orders of health authorities. This means that the NHS can accept tenders which offer pay and conditions far below Whitley Council terms. As a Crothalls spokesperson said: 'It is all part of the government's grand scheme to save money in the NHS. The health authority has accepted our tender with reduced conditions for some of the ancillary staff, because we were forced to compete with other companies.'

Jean Woodward has worked at Barking Hospital for 17 years. Currently she earns £66 for 33 hours a week. But from 1 April she will be given shifts of 20, 10 and 10 hours on a three-week rota at the Whitley Council rate of £2.29 per hour. So she will earn £60 or £40 for two weeks work. Total cleaning hours have been cut from 2,189 to 1,313 and weekend overtime and bonuses have been scrapped.

Sue Smith, a Nupe union shop steward, is the only cleaner not to be offered a new contract. She says the cuts will lead to an increase in the risk of infection in the hospital. 'The women would get more on the dole. We have been trying to speak to the health authority since last July because we wanted to have a say in drawing up the contract. A meeting was arranged just before Christmas but only one member of the management team turned up, the rest had apparently gone sick,' she said.

Redbridge district administrator Brian Payne said Crothalls had not offered the lowest tender but were able to operate 'more efficiently'. 'There will be a reduced service to non-patient areas like offices and staff accommodation but in clinical areas the standards are broadly the same' he said.

The public relations firm used by Crothalls is run by Michael Forsyth, right-wing for Stirling and author of two influential pamphlets praising the virtues of privatisation.

Phil Cohen

Nick Oakes/Scan

Cleaners lobbying Tuesday's Health Authority meeting

Caution: officers' ego at work

THE METROPOLITAN Police have finally decided to extend the cautioning system as an alternative to prosecution in certain cases. But there are fears that this will be used to increase the number of people who admit offences, rather than to reduce the number of people prosecuted.

A caution — not to be confused with the caution that is normally administered on arrest — is essentially a ticking-off administered by a police inspector. The Met claim that records of caution will be kept for only three years on an 'adult cautioning index'. The offender will have to admit to having committed the offence.

Yet it seems that once a caution is suggested, the decision not to prosecute has already been made, so the person under arrest has nothing to gain by accepting the caution. 'No further action will normally be taken', say the police.

Police forces across the country have different policies on cautioning. Some use it in almost a quarter of cases while others use it only for juveniles. The Attorney-General issued guidelines a year ago recommending greater use of cautions and the Met's move is in response to this.

But Walter Merricks, a member of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure and an advocate of the increased use of cautions, has expressed concern that they should not be used in cases where the evidence was not strong enough for a prosecution: 'The caution should be an alternative to prosecution and not a substitute for it in cases where there is not sufficient evidence.' But the Met press release states that among the criteria for the use of cautions is: 'are credible witnesses available?' and 'will any admissions be admissable in court, bearing in mind age and intelligence?'

The Met press office told the *New Statesman*: 'The police will only decide to caution where the decision not to prosecute has already been taken, possibly because it was unlikely to succeed'. It will apply to a wide range of offences including theft, criminal damage, assault, possession of offensive weapons and drugs, and 'sexual offences where the victim has been a willing party to the offence'.

But apparently the main reason for the Met extending the use of cautions is to boost the ego of its inspectors. According to the press release, 'an inspector will in most cases make the decision and formally administer the caution. There has been a decline in the status of the inspector and this will help to reverse the trend.'

Ironically, just as the Met is extending its use of cautions, the government is opposing moves by Labour MPs to introduce a clause into the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, currently in Committee, setting out a legal framework for the cautioning system. Home Office Minister Douglas Hurd says that he doesn't want to make the system too formal.

Christian Wolmar

Track record worst in Europe

BRITISH RAIL's investment is lagging behind that of the major European railways. And the gap is widening, according to a report published earlier this week.

Between 1976 and 1982 BR's investment fell by 70 per cent, because of government cuts. Yet figures collected by the independent consultants Transport and Environment Studies show that most European railways increased their investment over the same period. Sweden increased its spending by 40 per cent and Holland virtually doubled its investment. West Germany, which has a population only slightly larger than Britain's, invests six times as much in its railways as Britain. Even tiny Holland invests the same amount of money as BR.

The fruits of this expenditure are to be seen all over Europe. The best-known example is the French *train à grande vitesse*. But many other railways are building new lines, such as Italy's new high-speed link between Rome and Florence. The only British example of recent development is a tiny diversion in Yorkshire, built because the London to Newcastle line ran over the Selby coalfield.

BR currently plans to close an

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average of 84 miles of railway a year, over the next five years. However, between 1976 and 1982 the Dutch railway increased its route length by four per cent, and in France President Mitterrand has decreed that some closed railways should be reopened.

While BR's cherished electrification plans remain stalled other railways are pushing ahead. Even Greece is electrifying its main route from Athens to Thessalonika. Europe also spends more on subsidising its railways than Britain. West Germany spends four times as much as Britain on subsidy, and both France and Italy spend twice as much.

Because BR's subsidy is low, its fares are high. The second-class fare from London to Leeds, for example, is £21.50 for the 190-mile journey. A similar journey in West Germany would cost about £12.00, in France £9.00 and in Italy just £4.50. The report says that BR's investment should be increased and there should be more off-peak fare reductions.

Mick Hamer

BR: A European Railway: available from Transport 2000, 258 Pentonville Road, London N1, price £5.60.

Radioactive submarine entered Holy Loch

United States Navy officials have privately admitted that a nuclear missile submarine dangerously contaminated with radioactive waste entered the Holy Loch submarine base in Scotland late last month. The incident suggests that US nuclear submarines have been dumping radioactive waste off the Scottish coast. Because of local confusion about the identity of the submarine concerned, naval officials have until this week been able to deny that any incident had taken place. The Ministry of Defence faces a parliamentary question late this week from Scottish Labour MP George Foulkes about the event.

Residents in Dunoon nearby first heard rumours a month ago that one of the Poseidon fleet, the *USS Andrew Jackson*, had been involved in a radioactive accident. Strathclyde Regional Council then made official enquiries. The *Andrew Jackson*, it was claimed by naval officials, had not been in port at the time, and there had been no radioactive leak. People had 'misinterpreted the routine offloading of a missile'. Eyewitnesses also reported that the submarine's hull had been sprayed with water, but this was officially claimed to be 'routine'.

In fact there had been a serious radioactive accident, and this has now been confirmed to local council representatives, but the contaminated submarine was, according to US Navy sources, the *USS Sam Rayburn*, SSBN (ballistic missile submarine) 635. It carries 16 Poseidon missiles and is nuclear-powered. It entered the Holy Loch on the weekend of the 25/26 February and was taken aboard the dry dock *USS Los Alamos* which is permanently moored in the Loch. According to eyewitness accounts, everyone aboard the *Los Alamos* was issued with personal radiation monitoring badges the next day. Decontamination teams chipped paint and marine encrustation off the submarine's hull which was continually sprayed with water to prevent radioactive dust or particles being released into the atmosphere.

Although officials continue to deny that any radioactive leak has taken place, the incident appears to confirm local suspicions that the Poseidon missile armed submarines are discharging radioactive materials off the Scottish coast. A report prepared last year by investigative reporter David Kaplan for the US Fund for Constitutional Government quoted US Navy shipyard and submarine personnel as confirming that 'the Navy routinely dumps overboard highly radioactive resins'. The resins are used as filters for the nuclear reactor cooling water system and can be dumped from a nuclear submarine while it is operating at sea. In at least two previous accidents of this kind, the resin has been swept onto the submarine's hull, contaminating paint and marine debris such as barnacles.

Duncan Campbell

MISCELLANY

Loyalty test

This will be conflict of loyalty time for Joanna Davies, shop steward (or 'mother of chapel', as we say in mediaeval unions) of the striking National Union of Journalists at Dimbleby Newspapers. She did a lot of work in the Carmarthen constituency in the last election, but cannot decide whether to lend a hand this time. Of course, she hates the Conservative employment legislation, 'an unjust and ill-thought-out law', but unfortunately the candidate she was helping is the Tory, Nigel Thomas.

Arthur's all right

Arthur Scargill was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's 'Tuesday Call' last week. His interviewer, Sandra Chalmers (sister of Judith, of ITV's 'Holiday' programme) clearly knew nothing about the miners' strike, but knew what she thought of Mr Scargill and astonished listeners by reprimanding him for his views. An unprecedented 170 calls were made to the BBC after the programme, 150 of them complaining about her right-wing editorialising. Among them was Paul Routledge, the labour editor of *The Times*.

That's entertainment

The National Union of Journalists is a member of the Confederation of Entertainment Unions and its election of Tony Craig as editor of *The Journalist*, its newspaper, showed why. Craig was always in the news, most notably for reviving the appallingly sexist Varoomshka cartoon. But now the party's over. Craig has been sacked, although the circular from NUJ general secretary Ken Ashton to branches merely states that he is 'no longer' editor. In fact, Craig has been given the boot for claiming too much in expenses. These amounted to £8,000 last year and the final straw was a claim for a meal on a train which had already been paid for by a warrant. Ashton, who was 'not speaking to anyone' this week, has been personally signing the claims forms because other staff had refused to do so.

Operation Fanfare

The British telephone system goes to war next week. Operation Fanfare, British Telecom's rehearsal for nuclear devastation, was originally scheduled to take place two years ago, when the Falklands war intervened. The exercise was cancelled, lest anyone thought they were playing for real. All over the country selected telephone operators will be sneaking into secret underground fallout shelters below major telephone exchanges and other BT buildings. They will practise running a secret emergency manual telephone switching system which rejoices in the acronym of PODNEMSS (FOP).

Joint favourites

The list opens this week for runners in the race to become editor of *New Socialist*, when the theoretical journal of the Labour Party goes monthly (in September if things go as planned). Applicants will find that they are being asked to produce a full list of what they would put into their first issue. But even before they come under starter's orders, the smart money seems to be going on two potential runners out ahead of the field. One is Anna Coote, by Channel Four's Diverse Productions out of the *New Statesman*. Ahead of her is Stuart Weir by *New Society* out of *Roof*. At least this is one magazine editor's race that John Torode of the *Guardian* is unlikely to enter — because he is a member of the SDP.

What's What

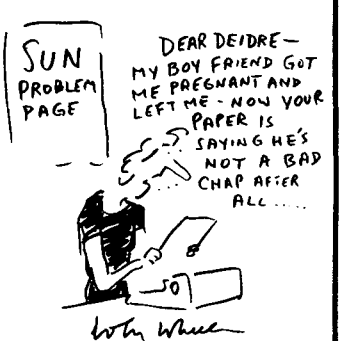
Andrew 'Two Chauffeurs' Neil, the new editor of the *Sunday Times*, has made it into this year's edition of *Who's Who*. His middle name is Ferguson and his recreations are listed as: 'eating out, New York'.

Time for trouncing

The by-election in Carmarthen should be the most interesting out of the four now outstanding. A three-way marginal in the last election, Labour has a chance to turn the seat once more into safe Labour territory. Plaid Cymru's popular Gwynfor Evans, who came a close third to the Tories in the general election, has decided not to stand again. Tradition decrees that the incumbent party decides the date of the by-election, and we hear rumours that 11 October is being considered. And when better to trounce the Tories in a marginal than in the middle of the Tory party conference, the day before the leaderene's speech?

Trial balloon

The 'Bring Back Cecil' campaign continues. Last week it produced an almost full-page '*Sun* special'. Instead of further stories about his love life and the revelation that poor Parkinson still pines desperately after Sara Keays, there was a lot of oily nonsense about 'it's time to forgive him' because he's the 'right man for Maggie now she needs help'. But even the *Sun* couldn't explain why, if it's all right for him to come back now, he had to go in the first place. This could be because at the time the *Sun* said: 'He emerges as, at best, a tortured, dithering man who could not make up his mind what he wanted', and explained exactly why he had to go. He could 'no longer


SUN
PROBLEM PAGE
DEAR DEIDRE—
MY BOY FRIEND GOT ME PREGNANT AND LEFT ME - NOW YOUR PAPER IS SAYING HE'S NOT A BAD CHAP AFTER ALL....
SO

inspire the respect, confidence and trust that must repose in a holder of high public office'. *Sun* readers may welcome back the man 'so weak he destroyed even himself', but no one knows if Ms Keays' fury has run its course.

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The 40 MPs du Cann can't sign up

THE PARTY shoot-out over whether Ma Thatcher has been over-protective of her son's and husband's alleged Omani hanky-panky moved into high gear in the Commons this week.

Brian Sedgemore bellowed like a bull elephant on Tuesday over the refusal of the Tory majority on the Select Committee on Members' Interests to investigate or even publish his 15-point accusation that Mrs Thatcher had concealed her indirect interest. He circulated his unpublished complaint charging that Mrs Thatcher had told the Sultan of Oman privately at his dinner for her that her son was involved in Cementation, the only company seriously bidding for the university contract. Sedgemore alleged she was thus able to plead publicly for contracts to be given to British firms and remain technically truthful when she claimed she had never pushed the Cementation contract.

By Wednesday, fully 269 Tory backbenchers — if you discount one of Anthony Steen's two signatures — had entered the loyalist corral by putting their signatures to the sycophantic motion of Edward du Cann, chair of the Tory backbenchers' '1922 Committee'. This accepted 'without reservation' that Mrs Thatcher had 'neither named, nor pursued the interests of Cementation' and deplored Labour sniping.

If one adds almost 100 Ministers and their PPSs who traditionally don't sign such motions, the ill and the absent, this leaves about 40 hold-outs. Most think Labour has been over-exploiting Mrs Thatcher's over-protectiveness towards a careless husband and a feckless son, but they resent having had to stand up and be counted. 'I did not like being asked to sign du Cann's motion', said one new and ambitious Tory MP. 'But once I was confronted with it, there was no chance I could avoid signing it.' In fact, 13 of the hundred new Tory MPs of varying hues held out against the temptations of demonstrated loyalism: Eric Forth, Patrick Ground, David Harris, Chris Hawkins, Peter Hubbard-Miles, Roger King, Geoff Lawler, David Lightbown, Anna McCurley, Mark Robinson, Michael Stern, George Walden and Ann Winterton (whose equally right-wing and rebellious husband signed up loyally).

These new and hopeful boys and girls showed up better than the old and rejected. Astonishingly, even such Thatcher-sacked veterans as Sir Ian Gilmour, Norman St John-Stevas and Francis Pym signed up, together with old Heathmen like Hugh Dykes, Robin Squire, Sir Anthony Meyer and Peter Thomas. Edward Heath himself held out, supported only by a small handful of old retainers: Alan Haselhurst, Robert Hicks, David Knox and Jim Lester.

In fact, the biggest group of hold-outs came from the 'awkward squad', those whom the whips might suspect of being contrary because of ideological or personal grudges. Thus, John Gorst still cannot forgive Mrs Thatcher for union-bashing at GCHQ. Jonathan Aitken and Richard Shepherd are fervent anti-Marketeers. Sir William Clark was one too and in 1977 he was refused promotion from deputy to full chair of the party. Although knighted Sir Hugh Rossi was sacked from junior office last June. The most engaging rebel excuse was: 'Anything Edward du Cann favours, I am opposed to, on principle!'

The most significant hold-out is Chorley's civil engineer-MP, right-winger Den Dover. He worked in the Middle East for Laing and Wimpey and was contracts manager for Wimpey-Laing Iran, 1975-77. He is still a paid consultant to Wimpey's and unpaid adviser to the Export Group for the Construction Industries. He can be expected to know what really happened in Oman from Cementation's rivals.

Andrew Roth

New focus on official secrets

FEARS ABOUT a net of State repression closing in on all forms of protest, has given the Socialist Society a new sense of purpose. Members, gathered for the second Annual General Meeting last Saturday, decided to organise a 'teach-in' on the various aspects of State repression later in the year.

Meanwhile, a rally to protest against the arrest and imprisonment of Sarah Tisdall, and against the control of 'official secrets' has been organised for Thursday 5 April at Conway Hall, London.

Over 100 people attended the AGM at County Hall, London. The mixed collection of socialists included many over 60 years old, a large contingent from the generation of '68, many women but very few black people.

Ken Livingstone, rushing in for the first of the three conferences he was addressing that day, spoke openly about the difficulties of implementing a socialist strategy through council machinery. It was part of his optimism that he thought future Left Labour governments could learn from the GLC.

Elizabeth Wilson, Communist Party, criticised views which overlooked women in manufacturing industry and working-class women in general, and which were over-critical of the role trade unions played. John Palmer, of the Greater London Enterprise Board and ex-International Socialist, deplored a general 'loss of faith in human reason and in human capacity to change the world.'

The Socialist Society, which was set up two years ago with an enormous amount of favourable publicity, quickly found that beneath the high hopes and good intentions it was not clear what its role should be. It appeared to have too many star names and too few hard-headed organisers. A more sober membership of around 400 people now appears to expect less.

Ralph Miliband, one of the founding members, proposed on Saturday a system of local Committees to Defend Democracy and such a scheme, if workable, would undoubtedly offer the Society a role. Other proposals for using the Society as a source of ideas and programmes for socialism are to be discussed in more detail in future weeks.

Sarah Benton

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Sarah Tisdall rally or the Socialist Society should contact 9 Poland Street, London W1, 01-734 8501.

Inquest on A-bomb vets

THE FIRST INQUESTS have been opened into deaths of British veterans who took part in atom-bomb tests on the Christmas Islands in the South Pacific during the 1950s.

Coroners in Dorset and Cornwall have opened and adjourned hearings into how two ex-servicemen came to die of cancer. Ian Loudon, a former RAF corporal from Bridport, died in November 1983 aged 46. Kenneth Measurers, a navy officer from Helston, was 56 when he died a month later. His inquest is expected to take place in May.

The secretary of the British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association (BNTVA), Tom Armstrong, said the inquests were the first of their kind. In the past, the death certificates of test veterans have reported natural causes like cancer and leukaemia.

Meanwhile the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) is conducting an investigation into the health of 20,000 servicemen who were present during Britain's nuclear tests 30 years ago. But the BNTVA wants a boycott of the inquiry. 'The NRPB is funded by the Ministry of Defence,' said Mr Armstrong. 'Its results will be scientifically invalid. It cannot be impartial.'

News of the inquests follows the revelation during a Commons debate of a memo to chiefs of staff, discovered at the Public Records Office, suggesting a plan to use troops as guinea-pigs in British nuclear tests. And last week MPs Gavin Strang and David Alton formed an all-Party group in the House of Commons, backing the BNTVA call for compensation for veterans.

Graham Smith

Steel at centre of Irish row

LIBERAL LEADER David Steel has been accused of autocractic behaviour and of subverting party policy by underhand means in a bitter row over the membership of a joint SDP-Liberal policy commission on Northern Ireland.

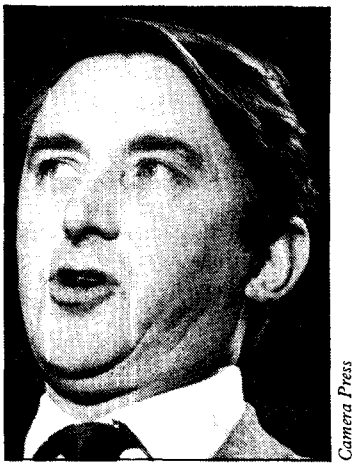
The Joint Commission was set up to formulate Alliance policy after the Harrogate Liberal Assembly last October narrowly voted in favour of a united Ireland. At the time the Liberal leadership, known to be unhappy with the decision, promised party members that the Commission would represent all shades of opinion in the party.

But a furious row flared when news of David Steel's appointees leaked out with critics accusing him of subverting party policy and packing the Commission with pro-Unionist figures. 'He is just packing it out with his friends who will come up with a "sensible" policy from his point of view,' said Michael Hamill, a Harrow Liberal councillor and joint author of a stern protest letter to Steel.

Five of the seven Liberal members on the Commission are known to hold pro-Unionist views. The party's Northern Ireland spokesperson, Stephen Ross, and ex-Special Boat Service Yeovil MP Paddy Ashdown, who served in Northern Ireland, plus former Liberal party president Michael Steed have already spoken out against a united Ireland. Two other members, Dennis Loretto, an ex-Alliance party Belfast city councillor, and Richard Moore, are also very unsympathetic to the Nationalist cause. Only Steve Allman, chair of the Liberal Friends of Ireland, is a recognised Nationalist.

'It's an attempt to change party policy by the back door. Steve Allman is just there for show,' said Michael Hamill. 'David Steel has appointed the Commission in the hope that after lots of debate it will prepare a long document and submit it to party assembly. But it will be presented in such a way that if you vote against it you will be voting against the Alliance.'

Kevin Toolis



Camera Press

Steel: putting the knife in on Ireland

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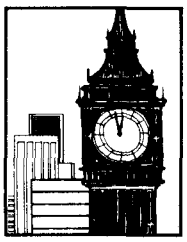

PETER KELLNER Political Editor

Figuring out Labour's chances of winning next time

HOW HARD IS IT for Labour to win the next election? In the past weeks three eminent political academics have poured cataracts of cold water on the party's chances. Ivor Crewe, writing in last Friday's *Guardian,* says that Neil Kinnock and his colleagues 'must secretly blanch at the electoral arithmetic of a Labour recovery', while Ian McAllister and Richard Rose, in a book published this week*, say that Labour needs a swing even bigger than it obtained in 1945 to win power again.

Coming at the end of the month when three opinion polls have put Labour back in the lead, it would be understandable if party enthusiasts were somewhat bewildered. The easiest response is to shrug one's shoulders and say that statistics can be bent to prove anything. But the truth is that on any calm, unsentimental look at the figures, it is likely that the Conservatives will lose their majority at the next election, and possible that Labour will win. Labour's electoral problems are not impossibly daunting; they are hard, but can be identified and overcome.

The main reason why Labour's prospects seem so bleak is that the party did so badly last June. It is certainly unprecedented since 1945 for any party to achieve a national swing of ten per cent; but equally it is unprecedented for either the Labour or Conservative party to start from a baseline of 28 per cent. For Labour to gain, say, ten points in 1987 would be not so much a departure from normality as a return to it. To say that a big swing would take Britain into uncharted electoral territory is wrong: we are already there.

Any attempt to look at prospects for the next election can only sensibly start from the premise that the Tories are likely (not certain, admittedly) to lose votes and Labour to gain votes. The table shows six outcomes of different gains and losses of support by Labour and the Tories. Only one of these six scenarios — A — leaves the Tories with an overall majority. Scenario C gives Labour a bare majority, while F — not, perhaps, the most likely outcome — gives Labour a majority of 64 over all other parties.

The main technical assumption in the table is that the swings are the same from seat to seat — or, rather, that seats that change hands on above-average swings compensate for those that fail to change hands on below-average swings. Last year, despite the complications of a national three-party contest, this method of converting votes into seats proved remarkably robust. A number of conclusions can be drawn:

● There is a clear possibility of a hung Parliament. If the Conservatives obtain 38 per cent support at the next election, any Labour vote between 36 and 43 per cent is likely to yield no clear winner. It would, incidentally, be unlikely that the Liberal/SDP Alliance would have a 'pure' balance of power, in the sense of having a choice of which main party to 'give' a majority to: it is more likely that the calculus of a hung Parliament would also involve the intentions of the Ulster MPs and the Welsh and Scottish Nationalists.

● For any given level of support for the Alliance, it is in the interest of the Liberals in particular for Labour to do as well as possible. A 10 per cent swing from Tory to Labour, with no change in Alliance support, would lift the number of Alliance MPs from 23 to 34. Of these, 27 would be Liberal and just 7 SDP. (Conversely, for any given share of the Labour vote, we should hope that the Alliance does as well as possible.)

The shape of Labour's electoral mountain

Change in support (%)

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Con	−5	−5	−5	−10	−10	−10
Lab	+5	+10	+15	+5	+10	+15
Lib/SDP	0	−5	−10	+5	0	−5
Votes (%)						
Con	38	38	38	33	33	33
Lab	33	38	43	33	38	43
Lib/SDP	26	21	16	31	26	21
Seats						
Con	344	311	290	279	275	250
Lab	266	298	327	287	316	357
Lib/SDP	27	17	10	61	34	19

● As long as Labour makes some recovery at the next election it is almost certain to gain a significant number of seats. Let us assume that Labour's 'basic' level of support last June was 33 per cent (roughly its level during the first fortnight of the election campaign) and that Labour lost five points specifically because of lousy campaigning. Merely to return to that level would yield Labour between 57 and 78 seats (depending on how the other parties' votes divide) — around one-third more Labour MPs than the party has now. This fact alone should put some of the party's reselection arguments in the shade. The political complexion of the Parliamentary Labour Party after 1988 will turn far less on whether a handful of existing MPs are deselected, than on who is chosen for the 60 most marginal Tory seats.

● A return to a 'basic' level of support of around 33 per cent will, of course, leave Labour still some distance from power; but not as frightening a distance as it seems by looking at the 1983 result in isolation. If 33 per cent is taken as Labour's 'real' starting point, the level of swing *then* needed for Labour to become the largest party is five to seven per cent — still on the high side by postwar standards, but far from unthinkable in times of volatile behaviour.

THAT IS the good-ish news. The bad news is this. Most of the first 60 or so seats that Labour is likely to gain are in traditional heartland areas in the Midlands, the North, South Wales, Scotland and inner London. *But most of the extra seats Labour needs to return to government are not.* They tend to be in southern England (e.g. Gravesham, Dover, Medway, Southampton Test), or the London suburbs (Ealing North, Streatham, Brentford and Isleworth, Hornchurch), or home counties seats where the SDP did particularly well last year (Cambridge, Stevenage, Herts West, Welwyn Hatfield). Even where the extra seats Labour must win are in Scotland, the Midlands or the North, they tend to be in the relatively more prosperous parts (Stirling, Tynemouth, Wallasey, Lincoln).

McAllister and Rose make much the same point by allocating each of the United Kingdom's 650 seats into one of 30 'social clusters'. There are, for example, 30 seats designated 'manual workers, council tenants, high unemployment, North of England': 26 of them are held by Labour. At the other end of the scale, the 23 seats designated 'non-manual, full employment, young population, South of England' are all Tory-held.

So far, so unsurprising. What McAllister and Rose proceed to show, however, is worrying. All but nine of Labour's 209 seats come into just 12 clusters. Even if Labour were to gain every single seat it does not hold in those clusters it would still have only 287 seats — still 39 short of an overall Commons majority. As McAllister and Rose observe: 'Labour must gain dozens of seats in constituency clusters that are currently overwhelmingly Conservative in Parliament. Except for (one) cluster . . . a London group very high in immigrants but also disproportionately middle-class . . . the Alliance finishes second in most seats in these clusters.'

Ivor Crewe suggests that a Labour-Alliance electoral pact could solve this problem, in essence by giving a free run to whichever anti-Tory candidate stood the best chance of winning. His arithmetic is impeccable; but the price Labour would pay is the surrender of *any* chance of winning power on its own. Labour's heartsearching might be easier if we had to surrender that dream anyway. As it is, the prospect of a Labour government after the next election is still plausible. Just as long as we realise that we need to elect MPs for seats far removed, both geographically and socially, from any conventional notion of Labour territory.

**The Nationwide Competition for Votes,* published by Frances Pinter, £12.95.

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Lynne Jones

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A GREENHAM PRISONER

Pam Isherwood/Format

Tuesday

I WOKE nauseated, cold, stuffy, and confused. Where was I? Newburynick. Why? Oh, yes, I refused to pay my fine — God, how stupid, why on earth didn't I pay it immediately and get out of here. Gradually, the fog of waking lifted. I ate the egg sandwich, thrust through the door and contemplated for the hundredth time the vast amount of Greenham graffiti on the cell walls: 'We're not just good, we're bloody perfection!' 'We're all going off to sunny Holloway, no more Greenham for a week or two . . .' And gradually I worked my way back to the position I had taken yesterday when I had told Stipendiary Barr that I thought my £50 fine for criminal damage could be better spent.

Speaking out clearly for one's beliefs is one thing. Spending the night in a dirty green cell because Holloway is full, and contemplating 14 more days of the same, is another. I am someone who finds tube trains and aeroplanes terrifyingly claustrophobic, so what was I doing voluntarily locking myself up? Liz visited me yesterday afternoon and asked if I was sure I wanted to go through with it, as she would happily pay the fine. It took all my willpower to say yes. I had no commitments, no children, £50 was a lot of money and I might learn something. This way, at least, I was exercising choice. Even here the fact that I could leave at any point by paying meant that I was in control.

They moved us at midday to this south coast prison, rather benign looking buildings of honey-coloured brick; except for the barred windows, double electric gate and high mesh fence topped with barbed wire, they looked like a modern housing complex. The fence reminded me of Greenham. 'Brought your bolt cutters?', one of the police officers asked.

There were four of us, Katrina, who has been here before, Alexis, Anna and me. They were having a party in the road on New Year's Eve: seven days for refusing to pay a £5 fine. Sitting in reception we could see through the glass doors to women waiting for medication. Sarah was there, pale and drawn from fasting. 'She hurts no one but herself,' the officer checking my belongings remarked. 'No one cares that she is doing it. It's pointless.' It obviously bothered this officer. I knew that I couldn't do it.

My clothing was returned to me along with a green booklet of prison regulations and a white sheet describing the prison routine: breakfast in cell, work or education, meals in the dining room, daily exercise and evening association. 'Don't take any notice of that,' a red-haired woman said. 'We've had all our meals in our cells for the last two weeks because there was a fight in the dining room: and more often than not there is no association because they are too short-staffed.'

An officer showed me my cell: 12 by 8, pea-green walls, a bed, table, a chair, a locker and a cupboard with a small loo and sink in an adjoining room. Women's symbols and peace signs stuck on the walls showed that Greenham women had been here too. 'All right love?' the officer asked. 'Why, yes, thanks,' I replied, surprised to be asked. The heavy, handleless door, with a pillbox slit of glass, slammed shut behind me.

Wednesday

Sarah caught me in the line for breakfast this morning. She told me that she had been put in a solitary strip cell for 24 hours for insisting on her right to a newspaper. 'They don't say you can't have it, just that it takes too long to process.' She looked exhausted. 'I asked not to work because I was fasting, but they made me. It's supposed to be voluntary, but it's slave labour, isn't it?'

In fact we're not working today. They are too short-staffed to let us out of our cells. I'm beginning to understand the expression 'doing time'. That is exactly what it is: a tangible substance, hanging heavily over you, clogging your senses. Life becomes the stretches between the sound of keys and any break in the monotony is welcome. I try to discipline myself to read and think, but instead find myself dozing or staring absently through the small strips of glass set in concrete that make up a window.

We did get association this evening. I came out of my cell into a corridor of dark, laughing women. The association room, a bleak bare affair of grey lino and plastic covered chairs was filled with women switching the TV channel every five minutes and queueing to do their ironing.

K. has taken the Greenham women under her wing. She got us second helpings of supper (tea and cake) and sat with us. 'Shoplifting,' she replied to the inevitable question, 'to feed my habit. Mind you, if you women keep coming in, they'll have to stop sending us down. "Deferred" the judge will say, "deferred, deferred, deferred, there's no room!"' She roared with laughter. The women here sum up their 'crimes' in one-word terms: 'cheques', 'smack', 'shoplifting'. There are three lifers and a few others with long-term sentences. The women's reactions to us ranged from friendly indifference to avid support. We've been in and out so often that they are very well informed. 'Soon as I get out, I'm coming to visit,' Q. says.

Thursday

Today we were allowed to work. This is probably the only time in my life that I am going to regard scrubbing floors as a privilege. Really it is just the relief of being able to stretch my arms and legs. Anne and I work together on the top corridor, at first being extremely conscientious, sweeping, scrubbing on our hands and knees, then wiping down. We quickly realised that everyone else was simply wiping down, as it made no difference to the streaky grey lino, besides which it gave us more time to hang out and chat. There is a work hierarchy here: wing cleaners at the bottom,

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librarians and hospital orderlies at the top. You work your way up by good behaviour and length of stay. Greenham women are mostly wing cleaners. We were sitting on the steps reading K. her letter from her sister (she can't read herself) when an officer came along. 'You girls finished?' 'Yes,' said K. 'I said girls, not convicts.'

We were locked up again after lunch. Theoretically each work shift gets gym four times a week. However, the gym's being cleaned and the instructor is away. But I've acquired yesterday's *Guardian* from N., one of the lifers. She stopped me in the corridor. 'Are you a Greenham woman?' 'Yes.' 'Well, I want you to know I am really with you in spirit.' She insisted that I come and look at the 'LIFE AGAINST DEATH' poster in her cell. 'You've made it beautiful in here,' I said, noting the curtains, books, potted plants and pictures with which she has transformed the cell. 'God, you have to, when it's your home.' 'How do you stand it?' I asked. 'It's like a bloody luxury liner after a submarine,' she replied. 'I was in Durham.'

It isn't the physical discomfort. I have a great deal more space and warmth than in my bender at Greenham. The whole thing, in fact, bears a distinct resemblance to my smart South Coast girls' boarding school, from the stodgy, unpalatable, overcooked food to the pop stars' posters stuck up with toothpaste in an attempt to make one's room a home. No, it is the small, endless, petty human humiliations: the plastic cutlery, bowl, plate and cup; the strip search by uniformed officers, and the fact that while being called 'girls', or 'love', or 'pet', whatever your age, is at least friendly, it also diminishes you and places you firmly at the bottom of a hierarchy. You could scarcely respond in the same vein.

Your life is completely exposed, watched through doors, every letter read and everything must be asked for, with no guarantee that your request will be granted. Refusal is a fine art. No one actually ever says no. You are faced instead with a smiling officer who says, 'Ask the wing officer,' who says, 'I'd really like to help, but you'll have to ask the governor.' And the little white request forms pile up and pile up, like my daily request for my notebook, or A.'s repeated request to move back to the wing where her friends are. We are like small children. The only power we have is to cause trouble and who wants to risk losing remission?

Friday

I've started taking pain killers for sciatica which is the only way I could think of getting a twice daily walk along the corridor to ease the cramp brought on by lack of exercise. In the queue for medication everyone was restless and bad-tempered at being 'banged up' for yet another day, as half the officers were sick — no work, no association. 'I'd rather be in Holloway,' one woman said, 'at least you get out twice a day.' 'They have to let us out to the kitchen,' another said. She was dressed in gum boots and a dirty apron, had straggly red hair pulled back in an elastic band and the pasty complexion that everyone acquires after a few weeks here. 'How long have you been here?' I asked. 'Four months, I got 18, for possession. I expected 6 but not 18, but the judge was biased. It makes you really bitter. I might as well have done armed robbery. You end up thinking — cor, when I get out, I may as well be bent.' 'What did you do before?' 'I was at college and everything, doing secretarial. You'd have thought it would have counted, but he didn't care.' 'Can't you go on with it here?' 'I thought I could, but the education department here is hopeless, hopeless! I went to one class, Beauty Culture. I could have taught it better myself . . . my appeal is coming up Monday. I'm trying not to think about it. Other girls get very down afterwards.'

She rolled a cigarette, split the match she was holding carefully, placing half back into the box. 'Why didn't you go to Holloway?' she asked me. 'Too crowded.' 'I guess it's 'cos everyone's short after Christmas.' 'Sorry?' 'Everyone's short,' she repeated patiently. 'So they nick things — shoplifting — that's the most common, I s'pose it's easier than drugs.' 'Where are you, then?' another woman asked me. 'Third floor,' I replied. 'Hard luck', she said, a look of pity on her face. 'Why?' I asked. 'Well, it's darkest Africa up there, isn't it?' We lined up at the hatch to get our drugs. Q. came out grinning. 'She gave me an extra dose of valium — I'm just going to glide through my last few weeks.' We met K., face haggard, walking down the corridor, clutching her belongings. 'I'm really strung out. I'm going into the sick bay for a few days. I just can't keep my head together, can't get any rest.'

It's never quiet on the wing, even at night; there is always a subterrnean murmur of music playing on radios, women's voices, a shout, water running, hard heels in the corridor. But the noise level has been rising steadily all day until I am convinced that I must be the only one still locked in my cell and that everyone else must be outside the door. But it's only women shouting to each other.

Saturday

They let us out for the whole morning, it felt like a holiday, with the library being open and Woo and Tim emerging from their cells to swoop me up in an enormous embrace. They had done a 6-hour journey the previous day cooped up in mesh cages in the back of a police van. It saves on staff. However, Tim is close on six feet tall, so it meant that her knees were up to her chest and her head bent down. 'Next time they'll have to carry me into it,' she said.

Sunday

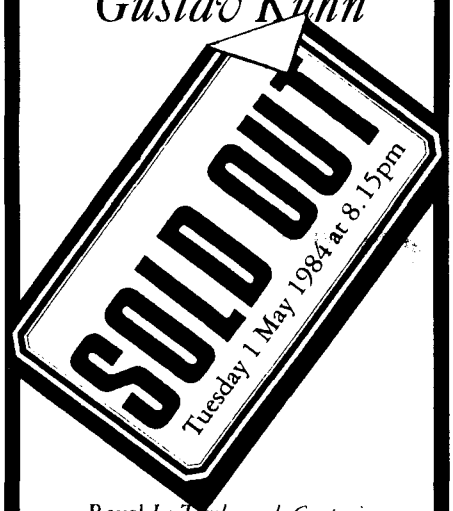
N. told me, this morning, that she had heard on the radio they were definitely going to evict the whole camp on Monday. There's no way of confirming it, so I sat all morning trying to think what to do: to stay on a point of principle or pay off the remainder of my fine and get back to the camp. Woo and Tim feel that you should never pay them a penny, but they leave tomorrow anyway.

In the end I decided I couldn't bear sitting here wondering if the camp was being shredded, and that I could be more useful there. Could I make a phone call to raise the money? 'No, it's Sunday. You'll have to ask permission from Welfare tomorrow.' 'But I'd like to leave tomorrow, as early as possible, so I need to raise the money today. My little green book says "consult your wing officer". And that's you.' 'I'm sorry, I can't help.' 'Is there SOMEONE you could ask?' 'I'll ask the chief.' An hour later

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa

English Chamber Orchestra

Gustav Kuhn



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Mobil

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she returned. 'The chief says no!' 'Why? Did you explain?' 'I'm sorry, you can't.' 'May I talk to the chief?' 'No!' She shut my cell door to cut off further conversation.

I sat raging, furious also with myself. What about Emma Goldman, two years for leafleting on birth control? What about Louise Michel? What about the women tortured and 'disappeared' in Chile, El Salvador, South Africa? What about the women in here for months and years for goodness sakes. What did two days matter? . . . I was still raging.

We got association this evening for a second time in a week. I sat and talked with B., in for eight years, for supposedly allowing bombs to be made in her kitchen. A quiet, warm, middle-aged woman, knitting a children's jumper; it was impossible to believe, listening to her, that she was guilty. 'I didn't jump bail because I believed I could prove I was not guilty. And here I am.' She has been trying for eight years to get her trial reopened. 'Of course, I didn't do it. I don't even know what nitroglycerine is. I can't stand the way the IRA work. I'll have nothing to do with violence of any kind. They wanted Irish bodies, they got mine. I remember the officer saying — because first they charged me with murder — "If we don't get you for this, we'll get you for something, you Irish bastard!" They won't give us a re-trial because they are scared of the compensation they'll have to pay, but I don't want the money, all I want is an apology, and if it takes the rest of my life to get one, I'm going to do it.'

I sat looking at the pictures of her children grown up and married while she was in prison, and the Pope, to whom she had written. 'What you women are doing, that's the way to change things,' she went on. 'You don't sound bitter, I would be.' 'Not bitter,' she replied, 'Just hurt, very hurt.'

Monday

'I'm sorry, you can't phone yet, Welfare's busy.' It was 10.30 a.m. A phone sat unused on the table between the wing officer and myself. Now that I had made the decision to go every minute lost was exasperating, especially as women kept coming up and hugging me and asking me to write. 'Come back later,' she smiled. Eventually she phoned for me. Yes, my friends would be down.

Today, of course, we had work, gym, a bizarre visit from the chaplain who chatted about his wife's home birth and I finally got to see the chief officer. 'I don't suppose there is any point in discussing anything, as you are going,' she said after she had signed my travel warrant. It was a statement not a question, and I was out of the door before my now theoretical points about access to notebooks, newspapers and association could be answered.

The search on leaving was a curiously arbitrary process. I was stripped naked and asked to show the soles of my feet, yet my clothes and books were bundled unchecked into my bag. 'X. got her appeal. She's out,' one officer said. 'Oh good,' replied the other. 'I hope you've no complaints,' she said to me, 'because that will take a lot more time.' She thrust a form in front of me and I signed under 'no complaints'. I walked past the women banging and grinning and waving from the sick bay door, into a cold, wet February afternoon.

'Come back soon!' Q. mouthed to me, 'Probably,' I mouthed back. □

Peace protests roll call

Thousands of people have now been arrested for taking some form of peaceful direct action in protest against cruise missiles, militarism or government 'defence' policy. The most arrests have been at Greenham where by far the largest number of prison sentences have been doled out. Scores of women have, in the last year, been put into Britain's prisons for their protests. The latest legal tactic where protesters refuse to pay a fine is for magistrates to order bailiffs in to take property up to eight times the value of the fine.

We print here a preliminary count of arrests since 1981 for peace protests. Inevitably some will be left out, and, on Greenham, the details in preparation will be printed later. From now, the New Statesman *will publish regular round-ups of who has been arrested and what has happened to them. As this information is difficult to get, readers are asked to send in any details they know personally to: Janey Hulme, Peace Protests, c/o New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.*

Place and no. arrested	Consequence
Upper Heyford USAF base 1000	From Easter 1981 to date approx. 1000 arrests including over 700 in July 1983 (not incl. 17.3.84). Many prison sentences.
Greenham USAF base 1775	Total arrests September 1981 to date approx. 1775. Many prison sentences. Details to come.
RAF Waddington 5	6.8.82, 5 women arrested for chaining themselves to gates of nuclear weapons store. Charged with obstruction, condl. disch.
Brawdy US tracking station 3	3 arrested for criminal damage, all condl. disch.
Leeds 17	Demonstration June 1983 against militarism. 5 arrests for demo, 2 arrests for obstructing Thatcher's car, 3 for obstructing Heseltine's. 2 to be tried 14.5.84 for criminal damage at ROC post and painting slogans on bunker. 9.11.83, Menwith Hill, 2 arrested and charged with obstruction. Easing Wold Civil Defence College, 11.12.83, 3 arrested for occupying college and refusing to leave.
London 666	14.4.83, 4 arrested from small demo organised by Catholic Peace Action outside MoD. Charged with 'marking walls without the occupant's permission' condl. disch. 29.9.83, 'Stop the City', 207 arrests, many cases still to be heard, The Guildhall. So far: 22 condl. disch.; 2 absolute disch.; 5 Not Guilty; 23 fined; one man, devout pacifist, fined £140 for assaulting a policeman, appeal to be heard. 31.10.83, 16 arrests, Whitehall, charged with obstruction and criminal damage. Nov 83, Cyclists Against Cruise, 48 charged with obstruction, 45 acquitted, 3 fined. 15.11.83, Parliament Square, 300 arrests. 16.11.83, 70 arrests, steps St Martin's church, Trafalgar Sq. 8.3.84, Camden Women's Peace Group; 19 arrests, trial for obstruction and criminal damage this week. 9.3.84, 2 arrests, hearing 6 April, Bow Street.
High Wycombe RAF base 183	19.12.83, 152 arrests at Dawshill, 113 plead not guilty, hearings this week. Remainder fined. 11 arrests Naphill Bunker, 2 who occupied crane charged with criminal damage, one with theft. Nine released after 5 hours' questioning. Up to 20 more arrests for bunker protests.
Molesworth/Alconbury 51	19 arrests, Molesworth, 9 fined for obstruction, 10 no charge. 32 arrests Alconbury, 15 fined for obstruction, others condl. disch. or no charge.
Little Rissington USAF Hospital 7	29.2.84, 7 arrested, but released without charge.
Boscombe Down Action Group 3	22.9.83, 3 fined for obstruction.
Porton Down 12	Women for peace and animal liberation: 22.8.83, 10 fined for trespass on MoD land. 27.8.83, 2 arrested for trespass on MoD land.
Bude, Cornwall 10	Feb 1984, 10 women brought to Bude Court for cutting perimeter fence at satellite station at Morwenstow; finally released without charge.
RAF Cottiesmore, Leics 5	2.2.84, 4 fined for 'wilful obstruction of police officers'; 1 charge of criminal damage pending.
Bishop's Court Peace Camp, Co. Down 12	1.1.84, 10 campers enter radar station, arrested by RAF police, but released without charge by RUC. Jan 1984, 2 further arrests, then released.
Scotland 176	Approx. no. of persons arrested at Faslane, Holy Loch, Lossiemouth since 1982: 176.
Brighton 11	11.12.83, 2 women charged with obstruction 8.3.84, 11 charged with obstruction; trial pending.
Southampton 13	8.3.84, 13 who blockaded A34 arrested and given an 'official caution'.

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OMAN CONTRACT

A scoop backfires

Charles Raw comments on a *Sunday Times* story

THE HAMFISTED intervention of the *Sunday Times* in the *Observer*'s campaign over Mark Thatcher and the Oman contract is likely, if the story dies, to have done more towards killing it than the banishment of Mark to America to sell Lotus cars — at £45,000 a year. Indeed, the recent controversial history of Lotus, resulting from its now deceased founder's involvement with John DeLorean, has left the new management and owners with a battle with the Inland Revenue over several million missing pounds and Mark Thatcher may find himself dragged into it every time there is a Lotus story.

It looks increasingly as if the *Sunday Times*'s 'scoop' this month about Denis Thatcher's involvement in his son's Monteagle company could prove the unexpected windfall that Mrs Thatcher's defenders are looking for, enabling them to divert attention onto the behaviour of the press, drawing on the hostility which the public is all too ready to feel for newspapers (well analysed by the departing political editor of the *Sunday Times,* Hugo Young, in his final column last week). I, too, am a recent departure from the *Sunday Times,* but I have not been around the building much for some months. Nevertheless from what I hear I believe we have not heard the last of the 'affair of the bank clerks'.

Quite apart from the techniques of the *Sunday Times* investigation, the most extraordinary part about its own account was the continued reiteration of editor Andrew Neil's initial justification: 'We note that neither Downing Street nor Barclays has denied any detail in our report'.

This is simply not so. Barclays and Thatcher's company Monteagle *had* denied one very important detail. The original *Sunday Times* story said that normally any transactions on the Monteagle account at Barclays had to be covered by two signatories 'but last year, Denis Thatcher was authorised to sign cheques on his own'.

But the Barclays complaint to the Press Council stated bluntly: 'We are authorised by Monteagle Marketing (London) Ltd to state that Mr Denis Thatcher is not, and has not at any time, been authorised to sign cheques on their account as sole signatory and has not for some considerable time signed in any capacity and has no "beneficial" interest in the account whatsoever'.

This paragraph was left out of the *Sunday Times*'s narrative and does not seem to have been taken into account in the paper's leading articles. This said: 'Many have concluded that there is nothing sinister in Denis Thatcher's cheque signing powers: maybe he just wanted to keep an eye on his son's various business dealings. The less charitable see the possibility that Mrs Thatcher's husband — as well as her son — stood to benefit from her "batting for Britain" in Oman. Our story made no judgment on the matter: it simply presented the facts as we found them — facts which nobody has since challenged'.

The claim that Denis had had sole signature powers on the bank account of a company of which he was not a director or employee was the most interesting — and sinister — detail of the original story, suggesting that any time he wanted some pocket money he could go along and draw it out. Given Neil's obvious ambiguity towards the Oman story, it is remarkable he should have ignored this crucial denial, which makes an innocent explanation more likely: Denis Thatcher may have given his personal guarantee to cover Monteagle's borrowings and wanted to keep some control on Mark and his pal's spending.

DON'T UNDERSTAND from this that I think the affair should not be pursued. My point is that when dealing with the personal finances of important politicians the use of any methods that can be made to look in the least underhand and the failure to admit facts got wrong are bound to be counterproductive.

And they make it much harder to convince readers that the issue should be written about at all, as the *Sunday Times* has found. It is always difficult to convince a large part of one's readership that private financial dealings — short of outright forgery, bribery or hand-in-the till stuff — should be publicised. 'What have they done wrong?' is the perennial cry.

A case in point was my revelation some years ago of the share dealing profits made for Edward Heath by Jim Slater of Slater, Walker before Heath became Prime Minister in 1970 — which, in my view, also involved the important issue of the nature of the relationship between politicians and businessmen. Recalling the lengths to which Heath went then to try to prevent me publishing the details of his investments held in a nominee account — which I should say, at the risk of sounding sanctimonious, I identified by long and tedious matching of numbers on public share registers — I find it somewhat ironic that the former Tory leader should be among those now urging Mrs Thatcher to come clean. Heath, himself, still ensures that his financial affairs remain as private as possible: his Dumpton Gap company, which owns the copyright of his books, is unlimited and therefore does not have to file public accounts. □

Charles Raw will be writing regularly for the New Statesman *in future.*

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GAY RIGHTS

'Not yet ready'?

Bob Cant on why the GLC is popular in Heaven

IT CAME as no surprise to many of London's lesbians and gay men when a recent Tory Party broadcast justified the abolition of the Greater London Council on the grounds that it was financing groups such as the Gay Teenage Group, Lesbian Line and the Gay Bereavement Project. Viewers might have been surprised to know that the sum involved in funding these three groups is less than £35,000. The GLC's total funding of lesbian and gay groups has since 1981 been in the region of one million pounds. Compared with their entire grants budget for 1983-84 of £41 million, the sum involved in funding lesbian and gay groups is of little financial significance. It is certainly a lot less than the rates bill of London's lesbian and gay population, who take very little advantage of all those facilities and services geared to families, or a heterosexual lifestyle.

The basis of these attacks is not essentially financial. Their main thrust is ideological. Their proponents believe, often correctly, that simply to use the words 'lesbian' and 'gay' will strike a sense of fear, panic and disgust into their audience. There is then, they hope, no need for any further rational argument. Sadly, many people, who in general support the policies of the GLC, remain puzzled and uncertain about openly supporting lesbian and gay groups. The lack of public debate on homosexuality since the 1957 Wolfenden Report means that many people are still ossified in their support for its conclusions — that homosexuals should not be persecuted for what they do in private.

The Labour group on the GLC has gone a long way beyond the patronizing arguments of Wolfenden. They accept that lesbianism and male homosexuality are alternative, and hence equal, forms of sexuality to the heterosexual norm; that lesbians and gay men should be permitted to be open and honest about their sexuality, without fear of discrimination and harassment; that the greatest current obstacle to the wider acceptance of these claims is the invisibility of the vast gay population. Many other bodies also have policies opposing discrimination on the grounds of what they call 'sexual orientation' but, almost alone, the GLC has been as explicit about its support for lesbian and gay rights, as it has been about any of its other controversial policies.

Gay mega-discos, such as Bangs and Heaven, are often condemned by radicals as being havens for the apolitical, but it is now not uncommon to hear people there talking favourably of Ken Livingstone. Readers of *Capital Gay*, London's largest gay newspaper, recently voted Livingstone their Personality of the Year. The funding of lesbian and gay projects is clearly one cause of this popularity, but, more importantly, GLC support has engendered a climate of openness and acceptance that Wolfenden 'tolerance' never did.

Funding for gay projects is part and parcel of the GLC's general approach; the aim is to make London's resources more accessible to a wider range of its people. A major feature of GLC policy has been to encourage 'self-help' community activities; as part of that policy they have bought a building which will become a Lesbian and Gay Community Centre.

Many of the other projects, such as the Lesbian and Gay Employment Campaign, the Gay Police Monitoring Group (GALOP) and the Gay Teenage Group Research Project are undertaking research into the nature and scale of the discrimination faced by lesbians and gay men in London. *Something To Tell You*, the book based on the Teenage Group research, is already available in the bookshops.

Both the funding and the activities of the funded groups cause distress to many traditional Labour Party members who fear that support for homosexuality drives away the working class voter. The result of the Bermondsey by-election is often used to justify this argument. Even Margaret Hodge, leader of Islington Council and well-known supporter of controversial left causes, has advised 'caution' over lesbian and gay rights policy. These arguments have a familiar ring to those who remember the fear of some white socialists in the 1960s and early 1970s that the working class was 'not yet ready' to be anti-racist.

A gay speaker at the recent London Labour Party Conference addressed himself to some of these prejudices, which imply that the working class is exclusively heterosexual, when he said: 'What has to happen before the daily infringement of human rights is considered urgent enough to merit action? We are not aliens, we are your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters, even sometimes your mothers and fathers. And we deserve your support'. Significantly, the size of the majority for the motion supporting gay rights which he was proposing (563,000 to 174,000) suggests that he must have won the support of some of the major affiliated unions, at least among the activists.

The major short-term gain of the GLC's funding of lesbian and gay projects has been to help break down the climate of fear which has for so long surrounded lesbianism and homosexuality. Lesbian and gay activists in the Labour movement have not been at all surprised by the hostility which the funding has provoked. If anything, it has inspired a greater degree of confidence about bringing lesbian and gay rights out into the open. The longer term effects are far more difficult to assess, but they must be part of that process of re-defining socialism for the 1980s and 1990s. The GLC has helped gay people onto that agenda. □

Lesbian and gay groups funded by the GLC include:

Lesbian and Gay Community Centre — £700,000
Lesbian and Gay Employment Campaign — £53,000
Gay Teenage Group Research Project — £20,000
Gay Police Monitoring Project (GALOP) — £17,000
Consenting Adults Theatre Company — £18,000
Lesbian Line — £11,000
Gay Bereavement Project — £375
Gemma (disabled lesbians) — £500
Gay Switchboard — £2,900
Applications under consideration include those from the Gay Black Group and the Stonewall Housing Association.

COAL INDUSTRY

Bottomless pits

Philip Wright exposes the arbitrariness of NCB accounts

THE TERM 'uneconomic pit' has a ring of finality about it. It conveys a certain surety, the impartial judgment of the market about the efforts of those who work in a seemingly hopeless and inevitably declining industry. In fact nothing could be further from the truth, for rather than reflecting 'hard economics', as even some mineworkers seem to accept, 'uneconomic' used in this context is heavily loaded, reflecting arbitrary value judgments. It refers simply to the short-term profit and loss accounts of the National Coal Board. Yet calculations of 'profit' and 'loss' tell you little on their own; we need to know the coal industry's relationship with other industries, its specific financial structure and the longer-term energy requirements of the country.

During the financial year 1982/83, the Electricity Council (Generating Board plus area suppliers) managed to turn a loss of £85m into a disclosed profit of £332m after interest payments. Now surely nobody would suggest that this came about because of some astonishing improvement in the internal efficiency of the Electricity Council? Nor did it come about because of increased sales, for they actually declined by 2.6 per cent over the period. In fact it mainly reflected pricing policy and the Electricity Council's relationship with the industry which supplies around 75 per cent of its primary energy input — coal.

Between the first quarter of 1982 and the first quarter of 1983 the average price of coal delivered to large industrial customers rose from £47.20 to £49.40 per tonne, a rise of just 4.7 per cent. Meanwhile, the price of electricity, also to large industrial customers, rose from 3.204 pence per KWh to 3.465 pence per KWh, a rise of 8.1 per cent. Assuming no change in volume, if coal prices had risen to the same extent as electricity prices during this period, the operating loss of £97m incurred by the NCB on mining activities would have been virtually eliminated.

But would not the larger price rise have made coal 'uncompetitive'? It depends what it is competing with: in the first quarter of 1983 the average 'coal equivalent' price of heavy fuel oil

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delivered to large industrial customers was about £74 per tonne and that of gas about £60, compared with £49.40 for coal. If the comparison is to be made with imported coal selling at between £20 and £30 per tonne, then, using the definition of 'uneconomic' currently being applied, this would be an argument for shutting down the whole of the British coal industry, apart from open-cast operations. It would also mean the closure of all nuclear power stations.

All this is to say is that the allocation of the profits between interdependent industries is arbitrary, particularly where monopolies (single suppliers) and monopsonies (single buyers) are concerned and where government interference is involved.

The £97m operating loss which the NCB incurred in 1982/83 (the accounts for the current financial year will not be available until August or September) was, of course, only part of the story, for there was an overall loss of £485m. By far the largest part — dwarfing the operating loss — was attributable to interest payments of £366m. In turn this reveals another set of reasons for doubting the wisdom of using short-term profit and loss information as a guide for policy decisions in an important strategic industry.

Since the apparent turnaround in the prospects for coal and the inauguration of the 'Plan for Coal' in 1974, the NCB has been investing heavily to modernise the industry. As a public corporation with a brief to provide its product at a 'reasonable price', it has had to rely heavily on borrowing (not on subsidies as many commentators misleadingly say). The alternatives would be to issue share capital or to charge exorbitant prices to raise money for investment. At the end of the last financial year, the NCB had £3.6bn of loans outstanding. The bulk of its debts was to the government, contracted since the onset of the recession. As well as coping with the impact of the recession on the demand for coal, the NCB has also therefore been caught in the midst of a modernisation programme which can only yield returns in the longer-term, and which has been partly financed at the high rates of interest that have been the product of monetarism.

Faced with such an adverse combination of circumstances a large private sector company might quietly cut or withhold its dividend, without any furore about it being a 'lame duck' and a drain on the country. In contrast, having no equity capital, the NCB has had to meet all its obligations as they have fallen due and it is this which has done the most serious damage to the 'bottom line' of its profit and loss account. As we are all in effect shareholders in the NCB, instead of talk about 'bottomless pits', would it not be fairer to give it similar leeway by, for example, rescheduling its debts?

NOT SO LONG ago, in 1979, the government itself was forecasting a total energy demand in Britain of around 500 million tonnes of coal equivalent a year by the turn of the century. At that time a rise in coal requirements was forecast and planned for, as supplies of North Sea oil and gas dwindled.

While this estimate of future demand may seem to be excessive today, the strategic problem of dwindling North Sea oil and gas supplies remains. Even assuming that total energy demand does not rise much above its current level of around 310 million tonnes of coal equivalent, it would be foolhardy to reduce coal capacity below its current level.

The alternatives which the government appears to be contemplating are very likely to be impracticable and/or far more costly in the longer term, even without considering unemployment and redundancy payments to miners and the devastation of local communities. Importing gas (from high cost Norway, or perhaps even from the Soviet Union if the current negotiations over the Sleipner field continue to falter) and oil will be expensive and will, of course, carry with it a foreign exchange cost which we may not be able to sustain. Energy generated by nuclear power stations is at present surplus to national requirements. But raising its contribution is likely to be expensive, even if it were felt to be desirable.

A longer term view needs to be taken not only of the coal industry and energy policy as a whole, but also of individual pits. One of the things which has so angered the Yorkshire miners about the decision to close Cortonwood is that losses have been incurred because hundreds of yards of new drivages have been developed to open up remaining reserves, and the colliery is now to be closed just when returns on this investment are in sight.

Since 1979 over 50 collieries have been closed — around a quarter of the total. Meanwhile the miners have answered the call to improve efficiency and increased productivity by 9 per cent (a cause of their undoing?). Further closures on the basis of short-term profit and loss accounts cannot be justified: the country urgently needs a coherent long-term energy strategy in which the energy sector is treated as an integrated whole. If Cortonwood is so obviously 'uneconomic', say the miners, why is it that only last October, £40,000 was spent on refurbishing the pithead baths?

INNER CITY POLICIES– WHICH WAY FORWARD?

a GLC conference on Thursday 5 April, 6pm-9pm and Friday 6 April, 10am-5pm. at the City University, Northampton Square, London EC1.

The enhanced urban programme has now been in existence for seven years, but Britain's big cities continue to decline. What is the future for London in particular and how should today's problems be tackled.

The conference will give participants an opportunity to be part of a wide ranging review of London's inner-city policies.

PLACES ARE NOW ONLY AVAILABLE FOR THE THURSDAY EVENING SESSION WHEN SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE:

Tony Kendall-Leader, Hackney Borough Council
Ken Livingstone-Leader, GLC
Professor Doreen Massey-Open University
A. Sivanandan-Institute of Race Relations
George Tremlett-Member, GLC

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CONFERENCE AND REGISTRATION DETAILS CONTACT PAUL HILDRETH AT THE GLC ON 633 8164.

There will not be a registration fee and there will be facilities for the disabled.

ILLTYD HARRINGTON J.P.,
CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN,
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Promiscuity isn't the cause

Jean Robinson looks at the medical profession's reluctance to examine the evidence on cervical cancer

CANCER of the cervix has become a classic case of a 'victim blaming' disease — a disease that victims would not have got but for their personal nasty habits, so it serves them jolly well right. I have met a number of women who have been firmly told by gynaecologists that they should not have had sex with so many men. The distress for women already coping with cancer — some of them dying — has to be seen to be believed. James Le Fanu's article (*NS* 16 March), while rightly drawing attention to the muddled organisation of screening, is unwittingly perpetuating medical male chauvinism in referring only to the 'sexual habits of teenage *girls*'.

Ever since 1842 when an Italian physician in Verona — Rigoni-Stern — found that nuns didn't get cervical cancer, and later researchers found that prostitutes were particularly prone to it, epidemiologists have been fascinated by the disease. Dozens of papers have been written by researchers who questioned women about their sex lives. But strong evidence pointing to other risk factors has been ignored.

There is no doubt that cancer of the cervix behaves like a mildly infectious venereal disease. It is a disease that women get from men, and every additional partner adds to the risk. The most likely infectious agents are herpes viruses and wart viruses. However, the literature on cervical cancer is strangely reminiscent of the 19th century literature on the effects of venereal diseases on our brave fighting men: it is a venereal disease for which only one sex is responsible — women.

Yet in 1971 an excellent study showed that if a women had only one sexual partner herself, but her husband was unfaithful, her risk of cervical cancer increased. Somehow the findings of this study were mysteriously buried: it was never referred to in subsequent review articles and cervical cancer continued to be thought of as a venereal disease caused only by women until a more recent study confirmed the risk from male behaviour. Nevertheless no one says to women with cervical cancer: 'Ask your husband to come to the clinic.'

The failure to involve husbands means that those who may have carcinogenic sperm — which has been found more commonly in manual workers — are not tested or warned. An American gynaecologist advised 139 women with positive smears (some of them severe and probably irreversible, i.e. needing treatment) to tell their husbands to use condoms: 136 of them got better without further treatment. Wives of men who have had vasectomies have lower cervical cancer risks, perhaps because they are no longer in contact with sperm.

Pathologist Dr Robert Yule blames the sexual habits of teenage girls for their increased risk. But the sexual habits of teenage boys have also changed. However 'pure' the girls remain until marriage, their future husbands may be silent carriers of herpes and wart viruses, unless they too restrict sexual activities and/or use condoms. Screening alone is not the answer. While we are pulling bodies out of the water, we ought to ask who is pushing them in upstream.

THE ANSWER is the doctors themselves who are prescribing the pill, sometimes to treat menstrual problems in very young girls. Before the pill was introduced, scientists knew that oestrogens caused cancer in a wide variety of animals. It was soon clear that women on the pill had more erosions of the cervix, which suggested at least vulnerability to further disease. In 1974 a Royal College of General Practitioners study showed that women on the pill had lower resistance to virus and parasitic infections — their immunity was reduced. In 1977 a research paper in *Science* showed that women with pre-cancerous changes who were on the pill were more likely to get cervical cancer than those who were not, so the pill was probably acting as a cancer promoter. Some studies did show that women on the pill had a higher incidence of cervical cancer, but these were dismissed by doctors who said women on the pill slept with more men.

In 1980, however, a major study was published in the *British Journal of Cancer* which showed that, when women with a similar number of sexual partners were compared, those on the pill for three years or more were significantly more likely to get cervical cancer. An American study published the following year showed similar results. *But women were not told.* Professor Martin Vessey's recent *Lancet* paper reporting higher cervical cancer rates in pill takers has been criticised because it did not include information on sexual behaviour, but the evidence of the pill as an independent risk factor already existed.

Two and a half years ago I was giving a paper at an international conference on cervical cancer. I mentioned the risks of the pill, which by that time I regarded as fairly clear. With one voice the distinguished gynaecologists present said: 'Whatever you do, you mustn't frighten women off the pill; they will all go off and get themselves pregnant and we'll be faced with a huge demand for abortions'. 'They don't get *themselves* pregnant,' I replied to one GP. 'Even the Virgin Mary had outside help.'

There may be another reason for doctors' unwillingness to admit — even to themselves — the hazards of the pill. Cervical cancer is the biggest cancer killer of women in the Third World and population control there may seem more important than other aspects of women's health. The preface to the Royal College of General Practitioners study began: 'In the minds of many people the population explosion had began to replace the hydrogen bomb as the greatest danger to mankind'.

Cervical cancer, until the pill, was largely a disease of poverty. Far from female promiscuity being the major cause, statistics by country, region, social class and occupation suggest that poor hygiene, poor nutrition and occupational or environmental carcinogens are the major risk factors. Yet most epidemiologists still prefer to question women about their sex lives.

THE GREATEST mystery of all is the medical failure to explore occupational and environmental risks for cervical cancer. The regions where women get the disease more often — Wales, the North and North West — are also the areas where they get more stomach cancer, stromes, kidney disease and heart disease. Their husbands are more likely to die of occupational cancers of the lung, stomach, penis and scrotum. Mortality statistics since 1930 have shown that miners' wives — particularly the wives of men who work underground — are at high risk. So are wives of men in other 'dusty' occupations, as well as wives of men who work with leather, chemicals, metal and machine oils.

One woman telephoned me in great distress after a television report that female promiscuity caused cervical cancer. She had had intercourse once at 17, and then met her husband at 18 and married him at 19. At 25 she was treated for cervical cancer. I asked what her husband's job was. He had been a machine tool operator, who came home drenched in oil every night. She washed his dirty overalls. Machine tool operators have a high risk of cancer of the scrotum: it is not surprising that mortality statistics show their wives have exceptionally high risk of cervical cancer. The woman most likely to get cervical cancer is no nymphomaniac: she is most likely to be a middle-aged or elderly widow whose husband came home in mucky overalls and who lived in a house without a bathroom.

Women are being urged to go for screening and told that screening is preventive medicine. It isn't; real prevention is not getting the disease in the first place — and that probably means better diet, better industrial hygiene and barrier contraceptives.

Jean Robinson is past-Chair of the Patients' Association.

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

☐The Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire, Mr Charles McLachlan, strongly denied yesterday that police officers had used a crowbar to smash the windscreen of a picket's car. It was, he said, a truncheon, not a crowbar. — *Financial Times* (W. Pugh)

☐The star among the guests was undoubtedly Commander Hucklesby, head of the Anti-Terrorist Squad at Scotland Yard. In his effect on the women present he rivalled the Toreador in *Carmen*. It occurred to me that probably the most glamorous thing one can be nowadays is a policeman. — *The Spectator* (F.D. Matthews)

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DIARY

There is a whiff of Watergate about the Oman affair and MPs should keep the issue alive. 'Every mother knows' The Boss covered up for Mark. I've been surprised at how fatalistic people are on the issue; the general attitude seems to be, it can't be proven so why bother? Of course she did not tape conversations with her son, nonetheless the awful piety and self-righteousness of her 'leadership' could be irreversibly deflated. For the Tories, liberty is a whore. And once The Boss's family values are pinned to desert deals and the sordid advantages of public office, the effectiveness of Thatcherite PR will be damaged. The counter arguments are obvious, I suppose. Where is there even that degree of independence of the judiciary and the press that allowed Nixon to be defied in America? With Sarah Tisdall behind bars and Hugo Young driven from the *Sunday Times* (his last column an exemplary, measured denunciation of what The Boss's 'freedom' has done to the press), we are obliged to rely on MPs and television reporters! Furthermore, how could one expect Thatcher to be brought low by petty scandal when she got away with the *Belgrano*? But Nixon illegally bombed Cambodia, yet was impeached for trying to bug a telephone.

○

Not that the *Belgrano* has ceased to play its part. It is proving more of a threat to the Prime Minister from below the water than it ever was when afloat. I was glad to see Paul Foot, in his excellent *Daily Mirror* column, bring out the Cheltenham connection. On 12 January this year, Tam Dalyell revealed that a source in GCHQ Cheltenham had told him that, five hours *before* the order was given to sink the Belgrano, the British defence staff knew that Argentina had directed the cruiser to return to port. Within two weeks of Dalyell's speech trade unions were banned at GCHQ.

Was it also coincidence that back in 1982 The Boss chose Cheltenham as the place to deliver her post-Falklands victory address? She told them:

> We have to see that the spirit of the South Atlantic — the real spirit of Britain — is kindled not only by war but can now be fired by peace... We know we can do it... Just look at the Task Force as an object lesson. Every man had his own task to do and did it superbly. Officers and men... All were equally valuable — each was differently qualified... As a team they raised the average to the level of the best and by each doing his best together they achieved the impossible. That's an accurate picture of Britain at war — not yet of Britain at peace. But the spirit has stirred and the nation has begun to assert itself. Things are not going to be the same again.

She went on to denounce strikes and antiquated manning levels and to conclude 'Britain has found herself... in the South Atlantic'. It is not that trade unionists are 'unpatriotic', you see, it is the very existence of unions that no longer fits the spirit of the times — the spirit of Cheltenham.

○

People tend to dismiss the stupifying things that political leaders say. Yet our rulers' words are often laughably revealing and can give us a privileged insight into the mentality of those who hold sway over our lives. That's why I've been collecting their Great Truisms in this diary. A reader has sent me one which is also a quintessence of sexism, from Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson. Admittedly, it was before the time that, well, that he held the office of President and oversaw US support for the Indonesian massacres, the dispatch of half a million troops to Vietnam, the invasion of the Dominican Republic. The future President came out of the shower, shook his penis in his hand and said: 'I've gotta take ol' jumbo here and give him some exercise. I wonder who I'll fuck tonight?' Need I add that he was boasting.

○

One of the delights of having a word box is showing how it works to other people, those folks who still live in the 1970s. The two most frequent questions are how does one write with a computer, as opposed to play with one, and what do they cost. My answer to the second begins with my first impression of the computer market: never buy IBM. The corporation has a commanding market position thanks to sales in the USA but not, it seems, because of value for money. Over here, at least, IBM is finding it more difficult and have slashed its price for a basic pc (personal computer) by nearly £500. But when you include the word-processing and calculating software to make it work, and VAT, a Sanyo has the same capacity for about £1,000 as IBM delivers for £3,000. IBM sells on its initials not its price, especially in America. In his recent *NLR* article, Mike Davis looked at the mass of dollar millionaires in the States, the lawyers, psychiatrists, doctors and parasites, who flourish while bag-ladies die of hypothermia. For these 'professionals' to do their accounts on an Apple would not look as good as doing them on an IBM in the reception area. They can write off the cost against tax and charge their clients extra. It is a model example of the way the market can get it wrong.

○

Unlike John Baxendale, who can't take a joke even though he is OK on Barthes (see last week's letters), Bruce Kent can — take a joke that is. After my complaint that CND's Christmas crackers were wretchedly silent, a mysterious and threatening package arrived at the *NS* office, addressed to Islander. Appended was a note from the Monsignor himself. Canny diplomat and leader that he is, he did not commit himself as to whether CND's crackers would henceforth go BANG! when pulled (as all crackers should). But he promised that this year they will include jokes. To prove it, Bruce Kent enclosed a personal fall-out shelter. It created much merriment in the office, not to speak of jealousy, as I walked away with a wonderful umbrella. It has the radiation danger symbol in black on red across the top, and declares the area underneath to be a nuclear-free zone. You can buy one for £5.50 or £7.00, including postage, from CND sales, 227 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

○

To go back to Baxendale, who wants to rid the *NS* pages of the supposed influence of F.R. Leavis. I remember Richard Crossman saying, well before he was editor, that the *Statesman* owed it to Leavis to make up for its reprehensible treatment of him; not that Crossman actually did so when he finally had the chance. F.R.'s ghost has never stalked the paper, so much as Bloomsbury's.

Islander

ROGER WODDIS

Yardstick

President Reagan, in a radio address, described El Salvador as 'an emerging democracy' where human rights were abused, but 'a nation which is strongly pro-American'.

There is a fundamental problem
Which keeps the Chief awake at nights:
How to convince his friends and allies
He is concerned with human rights.

The image of a fluffy chicken
Freely emerging from its shell
Is not improved by headless bodies
Which make the product hard to sell.

It doesn't do to be too squeamish,
Democracy has far to go,
But putting people on the payroll
May not preserve the status quo.

If D'Aubuisson's too crude a killer,
The road to ruin may be barred
By nodding to Napoleon Duarte
And hiring him to sweep the yard.

But even with a loyal hit-man
The basic problem will remain
When Congress gives its warm approval
To pouring dollars down the drain.

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Hussein's lost stinger

Claudia Wright on why the US Administration looks set to lose its Arab empire without shedding any tears

Washington

IN THE EARLY months of 1950, American officials were deeply troubled by a decision they were obliged to make regarding their most important client in the Middle East, King Abdulaziz (Ibn Saud) of Saudi Arabia.

It was the year the king had chosen to celebrate his golden jubilee, and as a presentation gift the State Department proposed a Steuben glass bowl, with a florid inscription in gilt Arabic script around the rim. A budget-conscious outlay of $1,000 was recommended, but the Assistant Secretary demurred.

At the time Abdulaziz was begging Washington to make him a present of US arms with which to build a modern army. The Assistant Secretary was opposed to that, but thought a glass bowl too cheap for a jubilee gift. He recommended $5,000 for a gold tray, and asked the US ambassador in Jeddah to comment. The cable came back opposing both bowl and tray, and suggesting instead a grandfather clock, with a light display electrically engineered behind the dial.

The Assistant Secretary concurred. 'In recommending approval of the expenditure', he noted in a memorandum, 'it should be considered that we have had to disappoint the Saudi Arabian government on some matters of great importance to that government in the past and shall probably do so again possibly within the next few months. If we can counter the effects of having to say 'no' on matters of importance by going along with them in small things, or making a graceful gesture, this bureau believes it is politically expedient to do so.'

The grandfather clock was chosen — and a spectacular return on investment it proved to be. Abdulaziz was captivated by the electrical gadgetry and had the clock installed beside the desk at which he sat to receive his foreign visitors. It was his talisman of American protection.

IN A TELEVISION culture, the collapse of empires is bound to make more compelling viewing than their birth. T E Lawrence once predicted the way in which the British would lose their nerve with the Arabs. We would, he said in 1928, 'hold on to them with ever-lessening force, till the anarchy is too expensive, and we let go'. At this moment the Americans are losing their nerve over the Arabs for the first time, but they aren't sure whether to loosen their grip or reinforce it. They also aren't certain which Arabs to hang on to, and which to let go.

The disdain American officials had for the Saudi king and his court in 1950 is mirrored in the Reagan Administration as an attitude of contempt for those Arab leaders who beg for protection the loudest or who need it the most. Temperamentally, Administration officials had little difficulty letting go of the fractious Lebanese, although in a non-election year they would have delayed their withdrawal and risked greater US casualties in the process. But what of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Emirates, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco?

While the Presidential candidates debate the circumstances in which they would be prepared to intervene directly with sea and air power or with ground forces in the Middle East (and the price they are prepared to pay to rent Israeli protection in place of American forces), is there an American will to pay a realistic price for preserving their Arab clientele from overthrow? The American capacity to distinguish between saying 'no' on large and small things has failed to mature with time. The recent episode of the 'stinger' anti-aircraft missile to protect King Hussein of Jordan and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia illustrates why.

The 'stinger' is a metal tube of about five feet in length, weighing 35 pounds. When fired from the shoulder, it can climb to a height of about 6,000 feet. It can alter course, and if it hits an aircraft will generally destroy it. It is a distinct improvement, electronically speaking, on its predecessor, the 'red eye', but according to US officials, it can be deceived and neutralized by the most sophisticated Israeli and perhaps Soviet equipment. It is therefore designed as a weapon against unsophisticated adversaries. In the Arab world these are known as terrorists. They sometimes include airforce pilots with a grudge against their regimes. The 'stinger' is hardly the type of weapon that can change the military balance in the Middle East in the way that the crusaders' longbow did.

Some Reagan officials believed, however, that after they had been driven out of Beirut, the 'stinger' would be a useful token of protection for the Jordanian and Saudi kings during a US election year.

KING HUSSEIN of Jordan was far from happy in February this year when, during a stay at an American medical clinic, he got wind of an attempt by the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, to bid for US protection by pushing Jordan aside. The plucky Hashemite monarch decided to stand his ground with the Americans. Between 11 and 14 February he and the Egyptian president tried to out-bid each other for American support.

Mubarak told US officials that, if they wanted to rent troops to protect American clients in the Arab world, the Israelis were clearly unsuited — Lebanon had proved that — and so too, he argued, were the Jordanians. The Egyptians, on the other hand, were more numerous, more battle-trained, more reliable under pressure, and more respected in the Arab world. For the amount of money the Administration was willing to pay for Jordanian auxiliaries — $220 million in the first year, with more than double that amount from Saudi Arabia — Washington was invited to make a bargain with Egyptian auxiliaries instead.

King Hussein countered with the argument that the Administration needed Jordan in order to demonstrate that it still had a viable peace initiative left in the Arab-Israeli conflict. But Jordan needed protection from Syria, he said.

He also needed to show that he, not Mubarak, nor the Saudi King, could make good on American pledges. Therefore, the King said, show the others that you can finance the Jordanian auxiliaries despite Israel's objection, and I'll deliver the Palestinians in peace talks with Israel in return.

Hussein had a justifiable concern at the Egyptian manoeuvre and at the Administration's inability to get Congress to approve the auxiliary proposal despite two years of trying. The King knew that he had no hope of controlling the Palestinians, if they saw possibilities of Egyptian help in negotiations with the US and Israel. He also knew that Israel regarded defeat of the proposal as the surest way to undermine American credibility in Jordan; and thus to destroy any prospect of Jordan entering negotiations with Israel on American terms.

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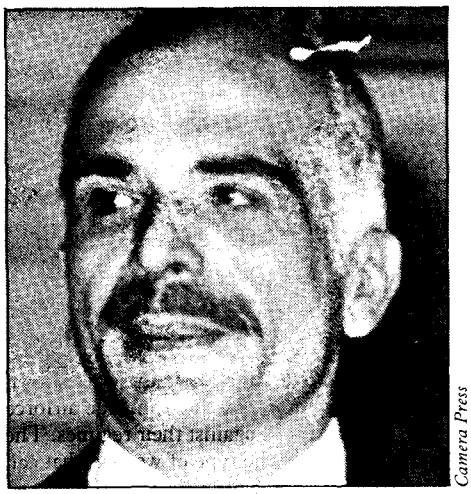

Camera Press

Hussein looking for his stinger

By the normal standards the King over-did his display of insecurity, and the Administration over-extended itself in its haste to reassure him. The 'stingers' presented the Israelis with such an obvious political target that the Jordanian monarch assumed that, in an election year, the Administration, could not possibly have offered them, unless it intended to go through with the deal.

Within four weeks the Americans proved the King mistaken. To mollify Israel and its supporters in Congress, the Administration offered to disable the 'stingers' by requiring that the rockets be stored separately from their launchers in Jordanian arsenals to which US military inspectors would have keys for random inspections. Since it was the *appearance* of US protection, not the efficacy of the missile that was at stake, Israel's supporters in Congress rejected the offer. This then obliges the Administration to risk an open fight in the Senate — the Israel bloc had the votes to win in the House of Representatives — or else drop the sales altogether. The King's display of anxiety in Washington convinced the Administration that it would risk less by abandoning the appearance of supporting him than by alienating the Israel bloc before the election. Accordingly, it was decided to abandon the 'stinger' proposal in return for a double bargain with Israel's supporters.

Would they agree, the Administration inquired, that in return for withdrawal of the missile sale, they would withdraw their opposition to the Jordan auxiliaries? And would they also withdraw legislation to require the US Embassy in Israel to move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem? The terms of the bargain were tantamount to the Administration's unconditional surrender.

The Administration was not only ready to abandon its strong card; it was ready to withdraw a second 'stinger' sale to Saudi Arabia, which the Israel bloc had decided not to fight. To the Israelis it was apparent that they need not bargain at all. The President appealed to a conference of Jewish officials to support the 'stinger' at the same time as his advisers had already decided to give up. This was the last straw for King Hussein. He called in an American reporter to disclose the charade for what it was. The Administration then blamed its surrender on the King — he was like his father, US officials intimated, psychologically unstable.

It is an odd Middle Eastern empire whose Arab clients cannot even be given the appearance of protection. What has held the Arabs to Washington has been their terror of the alternatives — Israeli attack or internal upheaval. King Hussein has come very late to the conclusion that the Reagan Administration offers no protection against either. The other kings and emirs, though silent for the moment, cannot be too far behind. The American empire is crumbling; a good television series is in the making. □

COMMON MARKET

Dairy farmers capped

Peter Wragg on attempts to stem the milk flow

Brussels

THE SPOTLIGHT in Brussels — last week and this — has been on Mrs Thatcher's Battle of the Budget. The comparatively small sum of money at stake was somehow turned into a national crusade. No attention at all has been paid to the real failures of the European Community — the inability to tackle mass unemployment and the collapse of industry.

Meanwhile, in the background, the agriculture ministers have been putting together their 'reform' package. It does not flow from any rational approach to the problems of European agriculture, but it will have important long-term consequences.

It has long been self-evident that agricultural over-production in Europe must be brought under control. But the combined vested interests of Europe's agricultural barons, the multinational agricultural supply industries, food processors and credit institutions have prevented action.

In an attempt to face up to this, the Ten have agreed in principle to a package deal aimed — among other things — at limiting the growth in milk production throughout the community. The significance of this is that subsidies for milk production consume almost 40 per cent of the Common Agricultural Policy's funding, which in turn accounts for two-thirds of the EEC budget.

Now, for the first time, an upper limit to milk production will be set, to be achieved by national production quotas. In Community terms these quotas are quite draconian, even though they will still allow production to continue at a level 20 per cent higher than current consumption — an indication of how serious the problem had become. Production above these quotas will be subject to a punitive 'super levy', which will take the form of a massive reduction in the guaranteed price the EEC pays to its milk farmers and dairies.

The real significance of the new measure is that it will end for the first time the open-ended guarantee to support milk prices at *any* level of production, which for decades has been the bedrock of the CAP and the reason for the infamous butter mountains and milk lakes. To that extent it can be called a reform. It is, however, a reform that will accelerate a trend that critics of European agricultural policy have already identified. During the last 30 years, dairy farming has been transformed into a highly concentrated, capital intensive industry where the drive for increased productivity has often had disastrous consequences — including rural decline, environmental pollution and damage to landscape and wildlife.

Farmers have been encouraged to mechanise, in order to cut labour costs, and to adopt new intensive farming methods to raise their yields. The entire sector has fallen under the control of international agribusiness and finance. The result has been that hundreds of thousands of small farmers have been driven off the land — sacrificed on the altar of efficiency. Those unable — for one reason or another — to secure modernisation loans were forced to sell up. This in turn has led to a concentration of farm ownership with land often transferred from the traditional farmers to institutions and corporations. Small was no longer beautiful.

The whole process was underpinned by the CAP's open-ended guarantee to buy up whatever the producers could supply. For those farmers who remained in business the name of the game has been expansion. Larger herds with increased yields meant better guaranteed returns in order to pay off the interest on costly investment loans.

The irony, now the open-ended guarantee is likely to disappear, is that it is precisely these businessmen-farmers who could be badly hit. Those with medium-sized farms — say 150 cows and 200 acres and an average debt-servicing requirement — are likely to run into real trouble.

IF THEY ARE set quotas at a level less than that at which they are able to meet their interest payments and maintain family income, many will be forced to seek alternatives. In current conditions, most available options would involve a withdrawal from dairying and many would decide to sell up altogether. This would only serve to accelerate both rural decline and increased agricultural concentration in the hands of companies and institutions. The 'open-ended guarantee' has become a machine which, when stopped, will mean that only those at the top can hang on.

In short, this 'reform' does little to open up a proper debate on the future of European agriculture. For example, why have the agricultural ministers squashed a proposal to tax the intensive farms? And how should the issues raised by intensive farming be dealt with in any alternative agricultural policy? Intensive dairy production is based on the availability of high-protein cattle feeds such as soya. Much of it has been imported from the United States, but the demand has also led a number of Third World countries to adapt their own agricultural systems to single crop cultivation of soya to serve the needs of Europe's crazy CAP. Any debate about changing the CAP must take this into account.

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FRANCE

The high price of austerity

The two main unions have reacted very differently to the government's austerity measures, reports Chantal Mouffe

Paris

CAN FRANCE's Socialist government continue its programme of 'economic austerity' without losing the electoral support that brought it to power? This was the central question raised by France's public employees, when they staged their recent one-day national strike. It was just the latest expression of discontent.

The most spectacular protest was the demonstration of more than half a million people at Versailles in defence of the independence of private schools. The government quickly backed down over its plans to integrate private and religious schools into the state system. The revised proposals presented by Alain Savary, Minister for Education, are being called an 'historic compromise' between the State and Catholic institutions.

A political war over schools was the last thing the government wanted at the moment. But the compromise does not seem to satisfy either side. The teachers' union, FEN, is particularly unhappy. It is dominated by an anti-clerical lobby and is influential in the National Assembly, where half of the Socialist members are teachers or lecturers. They have in the past constituted one of the strongholds of Socialist support, but joined other unions calling for a protest strike against the government's efforts to break the automatic link between wages and the prices index. The strike itself was the biggest for seven years, disrupting most government services as millions of civil servants and nationalised industry workers — 75 per cent of them according to the unions — stayed at home or joined protest marches.

For the Socialist government, such a revolt in the very foundation of the Left poses a serious dilemma. If it accedes to the demands of state employees, it will encourage other workers to come out against the austerity programme. If it remains firm, there is a real danger of alienating the 'people of the Left'.

Fortunately for the government, the pro-Socialist unions — the CFDT — condemned the strike. (Ironically, the CDFT looked as if it was coming to the rescue of the Communist Minister for the Public Services, Anicet Le Pors, while he himself was under attack from the CFDT's main rival — the Communist CGT.) But the CFDT's refusal to take part in the strike was not out of loyalty to the government. Its general secretary Edmond Maire has been unsparing in his criticism of the government since 1981. During the recent Talbot conflict, the CFDT led the workers, while the CGT defended the government's plans.

Maire denounced the strike as being a protest by already 'privileged workers' who have been protected against unemployment and whose real wages have been maintained. He believes that French trade unions are today in danger of lowering themselves to the American Sam Gompers's aim of 'more and more'. The CFDT leader considers it 'irrelevant and harmful' to fight to preserve real wages in an economic crisis where the main concern should be the creation of new jobs.

The last two or three years have certainly seen a striking increase in the tendency of groups in society to defend their own immediate interests and to try to shift the burden of the crisis onto others. The Socialists are in part responsible for this. When they suddenly switched to the policy of 'economic realism' and 'austerity', they did not at the same time produce compensating social measures or hold out to the French people a vision of a new society.

Unlike the Communists, the CGT and the followers of the CERES group in the Socialist Party (PS), Maire and the CFDT do not oppose the economic strategy being followed by Finance Minister Jacques Delors. They recognize the need for austerity and the restructuring of industry. But they are critical of the lack of 'ambition' involved in the Socialist programme and of the government's 'statist' and bureaucratic conception of politics. The CFDT wants workers and their unions to be at the centre of decisions, participating fully in industrial and technological choices. 'Austerity', in its view, should be used as a lever to change society. For the CFDT, the Left must redefine its aims, so that they do not depend entirely on high rates of economic growth and constantly rising real wages. Important demands in other fields — sexual equality, conditions of work, quality of life, ecology and collaboration with the Third World — should not be subordinated to growth.

THE CENTREPIECE of such a strategy is a reduction in the working week. It would help solve the problem of unemployment, while also helping social change. The CFDT believes that the main danger today is the creation of a dual society, with a sharp division between the 'protected' workers in the 'modern' sector and the rest — victims of the process of modernisation itself. Maire has recently warned the government not to think only about finding solutions for the problems of those in the traditional industries — steel, shipbuilding and coal mining. Something must also be done, he says, for workers — mainly women — affected by the micro-chip industry.

A century after its legal recognition — 21 March 1884 — French trade-unionism is faced with a real challenge, if it is to keep in touch with today's social developments. The CFDT is the only union really concerned with the situation of the 'unprotected' workers and of the unemployed. It alone has made an effort to take account of the changes that result from the massive influx of young people, women and immigrants into the workforce.

Even the CFDT is in some trouble. Its message of 'solidarity' is unwelcome to those workers who prefer to defend their own privileges rather than fight for greater equality. Its poor showing last year in a crucial election to choose the management of the social security funds showed the difficulty of going against the current tide. For the first time the independent union, the apolitical Force Ouvrière (FO) — which prides itself of being exclusively concerned with the material interests of its members — came second to the CGT, pushing the CFDT into third place.

Edmond Maire's brave stand in the public sector strike is not going to make him more popular. A secretary of Force Ouvrière has accused him of being 'the number one enemy of the working classes'. The CGT argues that, without the maintenance of real wages, there can be no economic recovery. The CFDT answers that keeping up consumer demand should be thought of in wider terms than just the wages of those still in work. Certainly, the total of money in wages and salaries must be kept up, but it should be distributed among a larger number of workers.

The same debate is taking place between the three tendencies within the PS. The minority CERES group agrees with the CGT and the Communists that the present austerity policies should be abandoned. It wants economic reflation and a high rate of growth. The other minority group AGIRS, representing the 'second Left' (in favour of self-managed, grassroots socialism), is in favour of austerity, but, like the CFDT, it insists on the need to link this to the project of radical democratisation of society.

At the last meeting of the PS executive committee, both groups criticised the contradiction between the government's rhetoric and its performance. Didier Motchane (CERES) argued that such 'schizophrenia' could only be dealt with by translating socialist principles and declarations into facts.

The party's First Secretary, Lionel Jospin, did not seem to think that there was any problem. He declared: 'we are forced to be in retreat with respect to our aims, to make compromises; but there is no reason to change our philosophy or our conceptions'. However, even among Mitterrandists, there is increasing worry about the government's samba politics — 'two steps forward, one step backwards'. These worries have made it difficult to implement the decision taken at last year's party congress at Bourg-en-Bresse to carry on the 'reconquest of opinion'. Now even the party unity achieved at Bourg-en-Bresse is in jeopardy. CERES supporters have refused to sign the compromise resolution on economic policy put by the leadership to the executive committee.

Meanwhile, the Right is mobilising public opinion with the cry of 'defending our liberties'. Could there be a better proof of the ideological disarray of the Socialists than the fact that the banner of liberty could have been taken away from them? □

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BRETECHER

WORKOUT

Now today we're going to do pelvic rocking... very important! If you don't get this right you might as well forget about giving birth
everybody on your backs nice and flat legs bent
I'm rotating my coccyx up-down up-down... gently...
I'm not forgetting my butterfly breathing pant-pant-pant UHH-UHH-UHH up down up-down... I'm pushing...
UHH-UHH-UHH-UHH I can feel my cervix opening
altogether.... like me...
Clive's got it very good Clive look at Clive, everyone
UHH-UHH-UHH-UHH watch me...to and fro...
would you mind putting out your cigarette Fiona? the smoke's making me feel sick
BRETÉCHER

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LETTERS

Miners and the media

Anthony Arblaster, Sheffield

It is a pity that the *New Statesman* could not find someone to write about the miners' strike with more understanding and commitment than 'Walter Pond' (*NS* 23 March). Leaving aside the ritual gibes at Arthur Scargill — without which no article on the miners is complete nowadays — it was odd, to say the least, to find him suggesting that the strike is already a failure, at a time when support for it was clearly spreading and intensifying.

But what I found more astonishing was the non-committal treatment of media coverage of the dispute. Pickets defended picketing because they thought 'the media could no longer be trusted to put forward the arguments over pit closures fairly', reports Pond. Does Pond think that the media *can* be relied on in this respect, or indeed ever could be?

'The pickets have come to see the media as predators waiting for the worst', he writes. Isn't that the truth? Inevitably the right-wing press has engaged in a sustained campaign of abuse and misrepresentation — 'Bullies scent victory' etc. But so has BBC television news. On two successive evenings last week I watched news reports which contained interviews with miners going to work, but none with pickets. When they did get round to talking to a picket, it was one who expressed doubts about the usefulness of picketing. The 'headline' one evening was 'Police ensure that every miner who wants to work, goes to work.' Well, three cheers. Does that strike Mr Pond as fair and balanced coverage? Or does he not care?

He made much of the adverse impact of televised violence. He said nothing about the provocative and blatantly partisan behaviour of the police. There was no mention of the one death — that of a picket; no mention of the Coal Board's threatened injunction, or of the Barnsley miners' readiness to defend their union headquarters against sequestration. And all this topped up with an overall coating of defeatism. Hardly what one has a right to expect from the *New Statesman*.

Marxism Today

Special Offer

April's *Marxism Today* carries a major article by feminist Beatrix Campbell, whose brilliant critique of many of the Left's myths about working-class life, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, is published by Virago this month. In her article she focuses her attention on the Labour Party in a devastating survey of its exclusion of working people, particularly women, from the exercise of power.

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Hygiene first, love later

Mary Walker, Surbiton, Surrey

James Le Fanu's report on cervical cancer (*NS* 16 March) is even more distressing to read, when he says nothing about preventing it. Research into cervical cancer reveals its prevalence in sexually active women. Among these it occurs less frequently in wives and lovers of circumcised men and also the rich. It is unheard of in celibrate women.

This villain in this tragedy is the dirty penis. Men handle noxious and toxic substances in their working lives. In factories, garages, laboratories, offices, building sites, hospitals, but even if they have clean jobs where scrupulous cleanliness is required, they still handle money, doorhandles in busy public places, often smoke, cough into their hands, fill up the car, garden at the weekend. Throughout every day, men visit the gents several times, washing their hands *afterwards*.

If a man bathes or showers in the morning, he is likely to relax with his beloved with clean teeth, hands and face but will approach her with a lethally unwashed member, introducing an unlimited variety of unidentifiable chemicals and grime — and cancer of the cervix. In the name of love.

Women must insist on better hygiene from their men; men should take greater responsibility for the health of their wives and lovers. I can't understand why more emphasis isn't given to prevention. It would save a lot of money and a lot of lives.

Videos and children

Martin Barker, Senior Lecturer in Communication Studies, Bristol Polytechnic

Raymond Johnston (Letters 16 March) displays a disingenuousness which is charming but not disarming. CARE Campaigns is rightly seen by many as the continuation of the Festival of Light, and that organisation was decidedly 'right-wing'. If that is the same as 'historic Christianity', so much the worse for the latter.

My particular reason for writing relates to his comment on me, and on the Parliamentary Group Video Enquiry's reports on children and video nasties. First, in preparing a report on Part One of this Enquiry. I was given unrestricted access to the papers of the Oxford Polytechnic TV Research Unit. It is quite true that I could not examine the raw data — but that was because they had been removed from Oxford Polytechnic, in the most extraordinary circumstances, by Dr Hill. But I certainly examined the research techniques and, along with many other researchers, found them sorely wanting.

It is also quite true that Part Two, recently published, does not make the grosser statistical assertions or the wildest speculative claims that made Part One such a feast day for the populist press. But initial examination of Part Two reveals it to be incredibly naive and sententious. Categories are created which bear minimal relation to data; how exactly, for example, should one read the 'opposition' between 'lenient' and 'protective' parents? Desperately naive inferences are suggested. We are told, for example, that 90 per cent of parents are in favour of State legislation on videos, albeit a good proportion contradict themselves by believing parents should have ultimate jurisdiction. This contradiction is interpreted away. To those with any respect for traditions of social science, it is evident that these 'opinions' are essentially a construct of the questionnaire, a aid of the campaign which has surrounded the issue. And do these researchers not know the problems of correlating people's declared 'opinions' (especially as tapped by this kind of questionnaire) with their actual practices?

Johnston accuses the *New Statesman* of joining a video industry campaign to discredit the Video Enquiry. Frankly I don't give a hoot about the video industry. But I do care about the Enquiry and I haven't yet seen anything to change my view that it is bad research promulgated for political purposes.

'Motherwell lass' named

Rob Edwards, Edinburgh

I am sorry if the anonymity of the 'young lass from Motherwell' offended, but it was not deliberate. For the record she was Mary Frances Harvey, a Militant supporter.

Smoke screens

R. A. McCartney, Hatfield, Herts.

A few weeks ago (9 March) *NS* published an article on the political influence of the tobacco companies. There were a number of comments I would have liked to make on this issue, however, I felt sure that others more qualified than I would wish to do so. The fact that none has is a depressing statement on the attitudes and priorities of the labour movement.

It proves yet again that tobacco smoking, the greatest cause of preventable death and disability in this country and the cause of 100,000 deaths a year, is not regarded as an important political issue in the movement. That is surely why successive Labour governments — like their Tory

Public rally

Free Sarah Tisdall
Fight for the Right to Know

Speakers so far: **Paul Foot** *(Daily Mirror)*, **Duncan Campbell** *(New Statesman)*, **Larry Gostin** *(NCCL)*, **Des Wilson** (Freedom of Information) and many others invited, yet to confirm.

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counterparts — have taken no action on this issue. There can be no other excuse. For if it is true that the last Labour government did its best in difficult circumstances on this issue and if a Labour government can't even take effective action on an issue as simple and clear-cut as this — where the public supports it — then the ultra Left are surely right in saying that there is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Labour's London ballots

Philip Jones, Morden, Surrey

'Members voted against the Left' is a misleading and damaging heading for your report of leadership polls in London constituency Labour Parties (*NS* 23 March). Had the impressionable simpletons who allegedly make up Labour's membership been brainwashed by the media into supporting 'right-wing' candidates — the reason normally given for opposing direct democracy — they would, of course, have voted for Hattersley or Shore.

Nevertheless, the results of the polls are very revealing. At the London Labour conference a month ago most of the debate was between a Militant opposition and the dominant faction associated with the journal 'Labour Briefing' (which fears Kinnock is another Macdonald). Opponents of constitutional reform of the Labour Party must have difficulty in justifying structures which allow leaderships to be quite so out of touch with the rank-and-file.

Big bangs for peace

Catherine Thackray, Birkby, Huddersfield

Unlike 'Islander' (*NS* 16 March) my membership of CND does not depend on whether I personally go along with every gimmick used for propaganda purposes. At 61 the T-shirts and earrings are not my line.

But we did buy a box of crackers and were delighted with them. Each cracker we pulled (with a bang!) revealed a peace quotation, a noisy blower, a CND badge (all different) and a balloon stamped with various CND slogans. They were universally applauded — even by those who were not members of CND.

So pleased were we with the balloons that we took them to a New Year party and on our return stuck them in a upstairs window beside a CND poster. They are still there — as light and bright as when they were first blown up.

Bile and bilge

Bernard McGinley, London N15

Anne Smith's bilious putdown of Harold Macmillan (*NS* 16 March) is so ridiculous that it should have been repudiated last week, but wasn't. Doesn't she realise that it is no more valid to claim merit because 'my father worked at the coal-face' than it would be for me to point out that 'Supermac was in the trenches' and somehow deserved more respect?

If one looks at the man's career, it is clear that in his emotional detestation of unemployment, his championing of Keynes, his mass housing programmes, his unsentimental post-imperialism, and even in choosing the title of Lord Stockton, Macmillan was not the run-of-the-mill careerist she seems so anxious to dismiss. If she remembers so little about him, how can she then go on to deride the familiarity of his voice.

There are other *non sequiturs* which Miss Smith is welcome to hold, but do *NS* readers have to put up with this silly hectoring?

FEEDBACK

No case for Gaullism

THE *NEW STATESMAN* (23 March) asked itself whether 'Mrs Thatcher was really batting for Britain'; Mr Neil Kinnock accused her of lack of national backbone in hesitating about anti-EEC financial sanctions while a promiment Parliamentary Labour Party left-winger went so far as to criticise the prime minister's 'yellow streak'. The 'more patriotic than thou' tone of much Labour reaction to the Common Market summit crisis last week was eerily reminiscent of the 'we demand action' speeches by Labour during the Parliamentary debate just before the despatch of the Falklands 'Task Force.'

It is useful rule of thumb that when the Labour Party reaches for the Union Jack to attack Tory prime ministers it is to cover up its own ideological nakedness. Europe and all matters EEC have long been a major blind spot for the British Left, but the EEC budget crisis has underlined the bankruptcy of official policy towards Europe.

There had been signs after the election that the Labour leadership was having second thoughts about whether a policy essentially consisting of an unqualified commitment to withdraw from the EEC offered a sufficiently relevant response to the deepening crisis entwining Britain and Europe inexorably together. The change of policy seemed inspired by little more than psephological calculation that a straight withdrawal stance might not be as popular as it once was.

Perhaps that was why the new emphasis on the need to look for allies in Europe for the socialist transformation of Europe did not survive the drama of the Brussels summit.

It is important to get in some perspective what was in dispute at Brussels — and at the time of writing — still is. The British government has been offered rebates for the next five years — with the clear implication that this could be further extended — in order to reduce excessive British contributions to the EEC budget. The gap between what the Tory government sought and what was finally on offer at Brussels was around £200 millions, or about £4 per person per year.

This figure should be compared to the £20-30 billion of wealth lost to the British people as a result of the deflationary and monetarist policies of the past five years. Or to the £10 billion earmarked for a new generation of nuclear weapons.

The EEC budget is — in other words — the merest chickenfeed. Even so, part of any socialist policy towards the European Community should embrace measures which result in countries paying contributions to and receiving benefits from the budget on a basis related to need and wealth. The question is how should such a fairer balance be achieved?

The Tory/Nationalist line is simple. The total EEC budget should be frozen and a system of rebates agreed so that payments and receipts more nearly balance. There are some grounds for wanting changes in what is spent under the present EEC budget and there is a strong case for completely transforming farm policy.

However, the Left has nothing in common with the Tories about the shape and direction of such changes. At present the greatest benefits go to the rich agri-capitalist farmers (notably in Britain), whereas the Left should argue for resources to be concentrated on income support of most benefit for small farmers (who in most cases make less use of high cost chemical inputs and do less damage to the ecology).

There is no case at all for lining up with the right-wing campaign to freeze or even cut overall EEC spending. Yet the British Left, which will back higher public spending nationally, is strangely reluctant to back the increase in EEC budget revenue need to fund higher EEC spending on regional, social, industrial, or other non-agricultural policies. Yet the higher the level of non-farm spending in the EEC the more the gap between Britain's payments and receipts will be reduced.

Instead, too many in the Labour Party still toy with a kind of shamefaced Gaullism over Common Market matters. Mrs Thatcher's nationalism is the real coin, both reflecting and stimulating the bigoted gibberish of much of the right-wing press — symbolised by the 'Hop Off Frog' injunction of the *Sun*.

But any socialist politics predicated on the need to develop a common European strategy must have application to the situation here and now in the EEC. It may be that one day withdrawal becomes inevitable for a socialist government in conflict with this or that aspect of the Rome Treaty. But, as many including Ernest Mandel and Barbara Castle have said in their different ways, European socialists expect the British Left to put socialist policies into practice first; and not to make the need to negotiate withdrawal first an excuse for not introducing such policies.

In the meantime there are all manner of short-term objectives which could provide the basis for common action and political unity between different sections of the European labour movement. These might include the demand for an immediate doubling or trebling of EEC social, regional and other non-farm spending.

The goal of common welfare and social services at the level of the highest in any one EEC country is obvious in a situation where monetarist governments say capitalist logic requires free movement of capital and free competition in trade. But trade union unity at the level of multi-national companies — such as that of the Kodak workers which the GLC has been able to help — to resist closures and unemployment needs developing into positive strategies for workers planning — including trade and investment across the EEC.

The Common Market is not Europe, but an internationalism which does not begin with the EEC is spurious. The main danger today is not that the Brussels Commission or the Strasbourg Assembly will strangle heroic socialist experiment nationally, but rather that national Thatcherism will be able to exploit nationalism to resist reforms such as the EEC Vredeling Directive on information for workers in big companies, or Commission directives on equal pay.

Anyone who imagines that the Rome Treaty or the present EEC institutions can be co-opted for the purposes of a Socialist Europe is sadly mistaken. But those who pretend that these institutions present the main obstacle to the Left in Britain are charlatans.

John Palmer

John Palmer is a member of the Socialist Society working group on a European socialist strategy.

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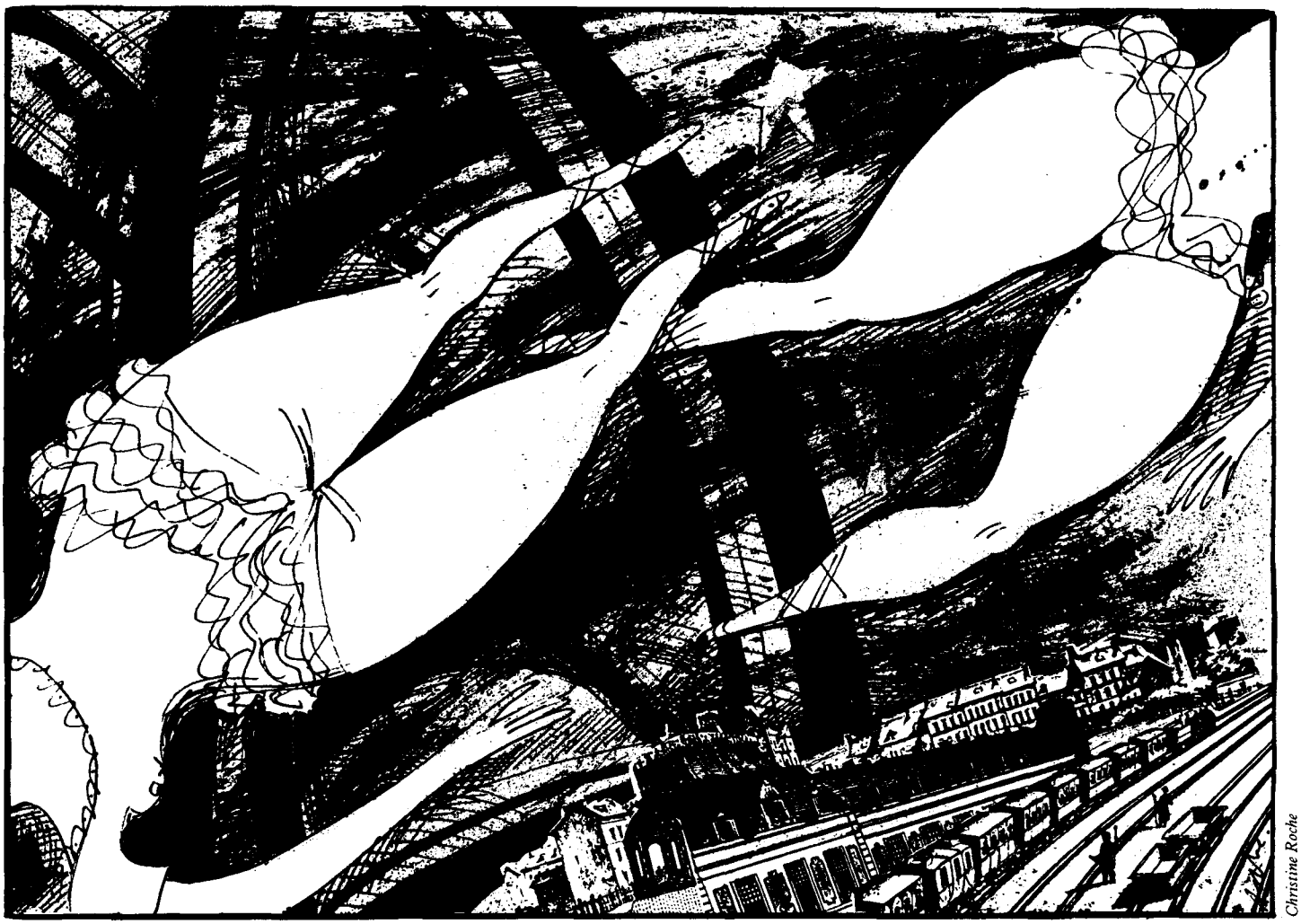

Christine Roche

A Fall from Grace

by Sara Maitland

THOSE YEARS the children — in Britanny, Bordeaux and the Loire Valley, even as far away as the Low Countries, Andalusia and the Riviera — missed their acrobats. In the Circus the dingy wild animals, the clowns, illusionists and freaks remained, but earthbound. Gravity held the Circus and the mud, the stench and the poverty were more evident. The magic makers, the sequinned stars that flashed and poised and flew and sparkled through the smoke above the watchers' heads, the death-defiers who snatched the Circus from the mud and turned it into flowers and frissons, were gone.

Gone away to the strange camp on the Champs de Mars, where they were needed to help Monsieur E. build his beautiful tower. Oh, the local residents might tremble in their beds with fear at the fall from heaven; intellectuals and artists might protest that 'Paris is defaced by this erection'. But the Circus people, the artists of body and philosophers of balance (with wild libidinous laughs at so unfortunate and accurate a turn of phrase), they understood; the acrobats — without words and with a regular 50 centimes an hour — knew. They alone could comprehend the vision. They knew in the marrow of their bones and the tissue of their muscles the precise tension — that seven million threaded rods and two and half million bolts could, of course, hold fifteen thousand steel girders in perfect balance. With sinews and nerves and cartilage they did it nightly: that tension and harmony against gravity was their stock-in-trade. Their great delight was that Monsieur E., a gentleman, a scientist, knew it too, and knew that they knew and needed them to translate his vision. High above Paris they swooped and caracoled, rejoicing in the delicacy and power of that thrust, upwards, away from, against the pull of the ground. And so they left their Circuses, sucked towards Paris by a dream that grew real under their authority — and for two years the acrobats and trapeze artists and highwire dancers and trampolinists abandoned their musical illusions to participate in historical, scientific reality.

Eva and Louise, too, came to Paris. Not that they were allowed to mount up ever higher on the winches, hanging beside the cauldrons which heated the bolts white hot; not that they were permitted to balance on the great girders, shifting their weight so accurately to swing the heavy strands of lace into place. Their skill, as it happens, was not in doubt, but they were women. They drifted northwards, almost unthinkingly, with their comrades and colleagues, simply because the power of Monsieur E.'s vision was magnetic and all the acrobats were drawn inwards by it and Eva and Louise were acrobats. And they lived with the other acrobats on the Champs de Mars, poised between aspiration and reality, and the city of Paris went to their heads and they were, after a few months, no longer who they had been when they came.

Their Circus had been a disciplined nursery for such children. Born to it, they had known its rhythms, its seductions and its truths from the beginning. Precious to their parents because

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identical twins are good showbusiness, they were only precious in as much as they worked and made a show. With each lurching move of the travelling caravans they had had to recreate the magic from the mud. Only after the hours of sweat and struggle with the tent, with the law, with the irregularities of topography and with costumes which had become muddy or damp or creased or torn — only then were they able to ascend the snaking ladders and present the New Creation, where fear and relief were held in perfect tension; where the immutable laws of nature — gravity and pendula arches, weight, matter and velocity — were apparently defied but in fact bound, utilised, respected and controlled; where hours of dreary practice and learning the capacities and limits of self and other, where the disciplines of technique and melodrama and precision were liberated suddenly and briefly into glamour and panache. And still were only a complete part of a delicately balanced whole which included the marionette man, the clowns, the seedy lions and the audience itself.

BUT PARIS, and a Paris in which they could not do what they were trained to do, was a holiday, where the rewards were quick and detached from the labour. As the tower grew so did Eva and Louise, but the tower was anchored and they were free floating. They learned to cross the laughing river and seek out the *boîtes* of Montmartre. Here, their white knickers and petticoats frothed easily in the hot water now available to them, they learned to dance the new dance — the cancan. Here their muscularity, their training, their athleticism stood them in good stead. They were a hit; with the management who paid them to come and show off round bosoms, shapely legs, pink cheeks and bleached petticoats; with the clientele whose 'oohs' and 'aahs' were more directly appreciative than those of any circus audience.

Yes, the beauty and the energy of them as they danced and pranced and watched the tower grow and watched their comrades labour upwards. They walked under the spreading legs of the tower and laughed at the jokes called down to them; they ran among the tents and teased the labourers; they turned the odd trick here and there for affection and amusement, although they could get better paid across the river where the rich men lived. Monsieur E., coming each day to see how his dream was developing, soon learned their names and would stop and smile for them, and they smiled back arms entwined with each other but eyes open for everything that was going on in the world. And they reassured him of his beauty, his virility, his potency, all of which he was manifesting in his tower which broke the rules of nature by the authority of science and the power of men. One day he told them, for the simple pleasure of saying it, for he knew they were simple girls and simply would not understand, that when his tower was finished it would weigh less than the column of air that contained it. The girls laughed and wanted to know why, then, it would not fly away, and he laughed too, indulgently, and explained, paternally, about displacement. But from then on the idea of the tower simply, ooh-la-la, flying away with them was fixed in Eva's and Louise's mind and it made them laugh because of course they knew that it was impossible.

And walking in the streets and parks they learned new styles of dressing and new styles of living; and their eyes were wide and bright with delight. Having little to do all day they wandered here and there, through boulevards and over bridges. In the flower markets they were overcome by the banks of sweetness, the brilliance of colours; in the antique shop windows they saw the bright treasures from China and Egypt, from far away and long ago; and in the cafés they smelled new smells and heard raffish conversations about things they had not even dreamed of. And everywhere they went, because they looked so alike and smiled so merrily and were always together, people came to recognise them and smile at them, and they felt loved and powerful and free as they had never felt before. All Paris was their friend and the city itself was their Paradise. They were a hit too in the *Salons des Femmes,* where the strange rich women who dressed like men, and caressed Eva and Louise like men too, were delighted by their health and energy and innocence. And by their professional willingness to show off. Louise enjoyed these evenings when they drank tiny glasses of jewel coloured drinks and performed — dances, tumbles, stage acrobatics — and were petted and sent home in carriages. But Eva felt nervous and alarmed; and also drawn, excited, elated — and it was not just the coloured concoctions that made her giggle all the way back to the Champs de Mars and swear that they would not go again. In the dark warmth of the bed they shared, Eva's arms would wind round Louise as they had done every night since they were conceived, but her fingers crackled with new electricity and she wondered and wanted and did not want to know what she wanted.

AND OF COURSE they did go again, because it was Paris and the Spanish chestnut flowers stood out white on the trees like candles and the air was full of the scent of them, giddy, dusty, lazy. At night the city was sparkling and golden and high above it the stars prickled silver and witty. And Monsieur E.'s tower, taut and poised, was being raised up to join the two together. In the hot perfumed houses they were treated as servants, as artists and as puppy dogs, all together, and it confused them, turned their heads and enchanted them. One evening, watching them, the Contessa della Colubria said to her hostess, 'Well Celeste, I think they won't last long those two. They'll become tawdry and quite spoiled. But they are very charming.' 'I don't know,' Celeste said, 'they are protected. By their work, of course, but not that; it must be primal innocence to love, to be one with another person from the beginning, with no desires, no consciousness.' 'Innocence? Do you think so? Perhaps it is the primal sin, to want to stay a child, to want to stay inside the first embrace, the first cell.' The Contessa's eyes glittered like her emeralds. 'Do you think it might be interesting to find out?' Celeste turned away from her slightly, watching Eva and Louise across the salon; she said quickly, 'Ah, *ma mie*, leave them be. They are altogether too young for you to bother with.' The Contessa laughed, 'But Celeste, you know how beguiled I am by innocence. It attracts me.'

She was mysterious, the Contessa della Colubria, strange and fascinating; not beautiful *mais très chic,* clever, witty and fabulously wealthy. She had travelled, apparently everywhere, but now lived alone in Paris, leaving her husband in his harsh high castle in Tuscany and challenging the bourgeois gossips with her extravagance, her outré appearance and the musky sensation of decadence. Rumours followed her like a shadow and, like a shadow, had no clear substance. It was known that she collected the new paintings and Egyptian curios and Chinese statues; it was said that she also collected books which respectable people would not sully their home with, that she paid fabulous sums to actresses for ritual performances, that she slid along the side of the pit of the unacceptable with a grace that was uncanny. But she had created a social space for herself in which the fear, the feeling, that she was not nice, not quite safe, was dangerous, became unimportant.

She took Eva and Louise home in her carriage that night, sitting between them, her arms around each neck, her legs stretched out, her long narrow feet braced against the floor, her thin face bland, only her elongated ophidian eyes moving. The sharp jewel she wore on her right hand cut into Louise's neck, but she did not dare to say anything. The Contessa told them stories: 'You see the stars,' she said, and they were bright above the river as the carriage crossed over it, 'long, long ago it was thought that each star was a soul, the soul of a beautiful girl, too lovely to die, too bright to be put away in the dark forever. The wild Gods of those times did not think that so much beauty should be wasted you see. Look at that star up there, that is Cassiopeia, she was a queen and so lovely that she boasted she was more beautiful than the Nereides, the sea nymphs, and they in their coral caves were so jealous and angry that they made Neptune their father punish her. But the other Gods were able to rescue her and throw her up to heaven and make her safe and bright.

'And those stars there, those are Ariadne's crown, it was given to her by Bacchus who was the God of wine and passion, not an orderly God, not a good God at all, but fierce and beautiful. Ariadne loved Theseus first, who was a handsome young man, and she rescued him from a monster called the Minotaur who lived in a dark maze and ate people. Ariadne gave her lover a thread so he could find his way out and a sword so he could kill the monster. But he wasn't very grateful, as men so seldom are, and he left her on an island called Naxos.'

'I know those ones,' said Louise pointing, breaking the soft flow of the Contessa's voice with an effort, 'those ones up there, those are the Seven Sisters who preferred to be together.'

'The Pleiades, yes, how clever you are. And you see that one of them is dimmer than the others. That is Meriope, and her star is faint because she married, she married a mortal, but the rest are bright and shiny.'

Louise's neck hurt from the Contessa's sharp ring. She felt tired and uneasy. She wanted to sit with Eva, their arms around each other tight and safe. She did not understand the Contessa. But Eva liked the stories, liked the arm of the Contessa resting warm against her skin, admired the sparkling of emeralds and eyes and was lulled, comfortable and snug, in the smooth carriage.

The balance shifted. They knew about this. As Eva leaned outwards and away, away from the centre, then Louise had to move lower,

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heavier, tighter to keep the balance. As Louise pulled inward, downward, Eva had to stretch up and away to keep the balance. On the tightrope they knew this; but it was a new thing for them. There was another way of course; their parents had had an act based on imbalance, based on difference, based on his heavy grounding and her light flying, the meeting place of the weighty and the floating. But they had not learned it, even in the gravity free place where they had first learned to dance together, in the months before they were born, it had been turning in balance, in precise sameness. It was the poise of symmetry that they knew about; the tension of balance. And it was foolhardy always to change an act without a safety net and with no rehearsals. They did not know how to discuss it. The difference was painful, a tightening, a loss of relaxation, of safety. The acrobat who was afraid of falling would fall. They knew that. But also the acrobat who could not believe in the fall would fall. They knew that too.

THE CONTESSA took them to a smart patisserie on the Champs Elysées. She bought them frothing hot chocolate and they drank it with glee, small moustaches of creamy foam forming on their pink upper lips. They were laughing and happy. 'Which of you is the older?' she asked. 'Which was born first?' 'We don't know,' said Eva and giggled. 'No one knows. We tumbled out together and the woman who was supposed to be with my mother was drunk and she got muddled up and no one knows.' 'If they did it would not matter,' said Louise, 'Our mother says we were born to the trade, we dived out with elegance.' Eva and Louise were pleased with themselves today, with the distinction of their birth, with their own inseparability, with the sweetness of the chocolate and the lightness of the little apricot tartlettes. The smart folk walked by on the pavement outside, but they were inside and as pretty as any grand lady. And in the bright spring sunlight the Contessa was not strange and dangerous, she was beautiful and glamorous, she was like something from a fairy story who had come into their lives and would grant them wishes and tell them stories.

The Contessa came in her new toy, her automobile, roaring and dangerous, to seek them out on the Champs de Mars. She was driven up in her bright new chariot and stopped right between the legs of the tower. The acrobats swarming up and down, labouring, sweating and efficient, swung aside to make space for her as she uncoiled herself from the seat and walked among them. And she knew Monsieur E. and gave him a kiss and congratulated him on his amazing edifice. Louise did not like to see her there, but she invited them into her car and they rode off to the admiring whistles of their friends. 'In Russia,' the Contessa told them, 'the people ride in sleighs across the snow and the wolves howl at them, but it does not matter because they are snugly wrapped in great furs and the horses pull them through the dark, because it is dark all winter in Russia, and the motion of the sleigh is smooth and the furs are warm and they fall asleep while the horses run and the night is full of vast silences and strange noises so that they hang bells on the horses' bridles, and all the nobility speak in French, so that people will know how civilised they are, and not mistake them for the bearded warriors who live in snow houses beyond the northern stars. And even the women of these people wear high leather boots and ride with the men on short-legged fierce horses. They ride so well up in that strange land that ordinary people have come to believe that they and their horses are one: they call them centaurs, horses with human heads and trunks and arms. Long ago there were real centaurs who roamed in Anatolia and knew strange things and would sometimes take little babies and train them in their ways and they would grow up wise and strong and fit to be rulers, because the centaurs taught them magic, but for ordinary people the centaurs were very dangerous because they were neither people nor animals, but monsters.'

And they rode in the Contessa's car around the Bois and she took them back to her house and taught them how to sniff up a white powder through slender silver straws and then they could see green striped tigers prowling across the Contessa's garden with eyes like stars, and butterflies ten foot across with huge velvet legs that fluttered down from the trees like falling flowers. And when they went home they found they could believe that Monsieur E.'s tower could fly, and they could fly on it, away away to a warm southern place, but they did not want to leave Paris, so they waved to the tower and they were laughed at for being drunk, and they did not tell anyone about the white powder.

ONE DAY at a party, the Contessa sought out Eva for one brief moment when she was alone and said, 'I have a pretty present for you.' 'Yes Madame.' 'See, it is earrings.' She held out her long, thin, dry hand, the palm flat and open, and there was a pair of earrings, two perfect little gold apples. 'These are golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides; Juno, the queen of all the Gods, gave them to Jupiter, the king of all the Gods, for a wedding present. They grow in a magical garden beyond the edge of the world and they are guarded by the four beautiful daughters of Atlas who carries the world on his back. And, around the tree they grow on, lies a huge horrible dragon who never sleeps. So you see they are very precious.' Eva looked at them amused; she had little interest in their value, but liked their prettiness. 'One for me and one for Louise, Madame?' she asked. 'No, both are for you. But you will have to come by yourself one evening to my house and collect them.' 'But Madame, we always go together, you know that.' 'Eva,' smiled the Contessa, 'I'll tell you a little story; once there was a woman and she was expecting a baby, and she wished and wished good things for her baby and especially that it would grow up to have good manners. Well her pregnancy went on and on, and on and on, and still the baby was not born. And none of the wise doctors could make any sense of it. And in the end, ever more pregnant, after many many years, she died of old age. So the doctors who were of course very curious opened her up and they found two little ladies, quite more than middle-aged, sitting beside the birth door saying with perfect good manners, "After you," and "No, no, my dear, after *you*." *C'est très gentille*, but what a waste, what a waste, don't you think?'

Eva giggled at the silly story, covering her mouth with her hand like a child. She did not care about the earrings but she knew that if she went to the Contessa she would find out, she would find out what it was she did not know, what it was that made her nervous and elated. She could feel too the weight of Louise, the weight of Louise inward on both of them, the weight swinging out of balance. She had to correct that inward weight with an outward one. Had to remake the balance, that was her job, her skill, not to fear the falling, but to counterpoise the inward weight with an outward one. Also she wanted to know, and if she went she would know that and something else perhaps.

'Yes Madame,' she said, 'yes, I will come.'

And the Contessa smiled.

SHE DID NOT KNOW how to tell Louise. She could not find any words for what and why; they have never needed words before, they have not rehearsed any. Next Tuesday she would go to visit the Contessa. This week she had to find words to tell Louise. Instead she drank. Louise, who knew she was excited but could not understand, could not pull Eva back to her, drank too. Their comrades on the Champs de Mars thought it was funny to see the girls drunk; they plied them with brandy and wine. Drunk Eva and Louise showed off, they performed new tricks, leaping higher, tumbling, prancing; they do not stumble or trip, they cannot stumble or trip. They are beautiful and skilful. This is their place. The men clap for them, urging them on. In the space under the tower they dance and frolic. They start to climb, swinging upwards; from each other's hands they ascend. Somersaulting, delighting, they follow the upward thrust of the tower; its tension, its balance is theirs. The voices of the men fade below. Once, as they rise above seven hundred feet, they falter. 'It's your fault,' says Eva, 'you lean in too hard.' 'No,' says Louise, 'it is you, you are too far out.' But they find their rhythm again, trusting the rhythm of the tower that Monsieur E. and their hard-worked colleagues below have structured for them. On the other side of the river they can see Paris, spread out for them now, the Islands in the Seine bright on the dark water, the gay streets shining with golden lights. Above the sky is clear: the moon a bright dying fingernail, the constellations whizzing in their glory. The tower seems to sway, sensitive to their need. It is not quite finished, but as they approach the top they are higher than they have ever been, they are climbing and swinging and swooping upwards. Suddenly both together they call out to one another, 'It was my fault, I'm sorry.' The rhythm is flowing now, their wrists linked, trusting, knowing, perfect. It is their best performance ever. Down below the men still watch, although it is too dark to see. They know they will never see a show like it. They know these two are stars. They make no error. They do not fall. They fly free, suddenly, holding hands, falling stars, a moment of unity and glory.

But it is three hundred yards to the ground and afterwards no one is able to sort out which was which or how they could be separated. □

'A Fall from Grace' will be included in Weddings and Funerals *(Brilliance Books), a collection of stories by Sara Maitland and Aileen La Tourette to be published in June.*

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MYTH
Patricia Craig

Thin brew

Goodbye Sleeping Beauty: Breaking the Spell of Feminine Myths and Models
MADONNA KOLBENSCHLAG *Marion Boyars* £8.95

In her efforts to concoct a new spell to vanquish the old ones, Madonna Kolbenschlag crams an excess of ingredients into her witch's cauldron, overcooks the lot and ends up with a pretty thin brew. She starts off, it's true, with an excellent idea. Her book has a picturesque framework, clear enough in outline. The closer you get to the centre, however, the more blurred the details become.

The book consists of five chapters, each presided over by a fairy-tale figure: Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and so on. The object is to present a series of analogies, psychological, social, etc., for the colourful motifs of the traditional tales, to uncover their most profound significance and to show how the blueprint they offer for certain types of feminine behaviour may be adapted to fit in with present-day ideas, or discarded altogether, for that matter, if need be. Actually, it's the pursuit of grace that engages the author's deepest attention (she's a nun), and this occasionally leads her to take an unconventional stand. Everyone agrees that Sleeping Beauty, as a symbol, can be equated with feminine passivity; and most people would go on to define her 'awakening' as the onset of erotic feeling. Not Madonna Kolbenschlag: 'Out of the ... recognition of the metaphor as descriptive of a universal condition that is passing, arises a dynamic symbol calling women forth ... to spiritual maturity.' Oh yes.

One of the problems involved in extracting psychic emblems from nursery stories is the near-impossibility of avoiding bathos. You need a well-developed sense of the absurd and a rare lightness of touch to keep your commentary judicious. These qualities, on the evidence of her book, Madonna Kolbenschlag doesn't possess. Take Snow White, for example: when we read, *à propos* of the dwarfs, 'their lives are conflict-free, they are excluded from the process of transformation', we have to remind ourselves that Dozy, Grumpy and the rest of them are funny little men with beards. Similarly with Goldilocks and her 'ill-fitting roles'; and as for the Three Bears — well, I do not think many people will be enchanted by the association of this interesting little family with Freud's 'superego, ego and id' idea.

The Goldilocks chapter is subtitled 'The Search for the Perfect Family' but actually it turns into a defence of solitude, to which the heroine is wrongly appropriated. 'Aloneness is her destiny', Madonna Kolbenschlag claims, melodramatic as ever; but in fact in most versions of the story Goldilocks is quickly reunited with her nurse, who chides her for straying: 'You are in luck, there's no denying/ To get away in safety from/ THREE BEARS.' So, a cautionary tale about childhood rashness, not a retreat into the forest to search for one's truest identity.

In the wake of Goldilocks, the content of each chapter strays pretty far from its starting-point, as the author sets out her prescription for achieving what she calls full 'personhood' — autonomy, spirituality or whatever. The bulk of the argument consists in the reiteration of routine observations: 'A woman's identity is no longer circumscribed by motherhood, child-rearing and wifely duties.' Yes, we've had all that before. However, better mundane than devotional: the Virgin Mary, we learn, with something like disbelief, is the 'eschatological symbol of humanity freed from the tyranny of roles'.

There is something infinitely imprecise and disputable about this assertion, and not about that alone. The effect of vagueness, it's true, is partly a consequence of the turgid prose style — awful verbs like 'ghettoized' turning up all over the place, along with infelicitous expressions like 'nucleated sameness' and 'sociobiological dyad' (the last, for heaven's sake, referring to the marriage partnership). However, it has more to do with continuous generalisations, and with the emphasis it places on some unattainable and ill-defined state of 'transcendence'.

When we reach the postscript, the book — after all its inflation — suddenly lapses into coyness with a letter, starting 'Dearest Prince', and signed 'Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty' and so on, which talks at some length about the need of men and women alike to get to grips with their 'true selves'. Madonna Kolbenschlag's sincerity and honesty are not in question, and neither is her understanding of certain factors militating against 'autonomy', or her command of sociohistrionic jargon. But she offers no proposition especially cogent, regenerative or original. □

Julie O'Callaghan

Get-up

Mom and I, depending on the weather,
go for a walk around
in our duds every afternoon.
It's a kinda tradition.
I mean, well if it's a whatchamacallit,
a blizzard or tornado, why then,
we'd stay in, wouldn't we Mom?
Mom ain't as chipper as she used to be, see.
I suppose I'm not neither.
I guess I got started years ago
walking my beat in the coppers.
Then when I left I kinda liked
strolling around in some sorta get-up.
Right Mom? Devon, Broadway Avenue,
Sheridan Road, sure, we don't pick 'em,
we just move our legs
and go wherever they go.
Mom'll put on a sparkly coolie hat
and her 'me-Tarzan-you-Jane' outfit
and she's a real hit.

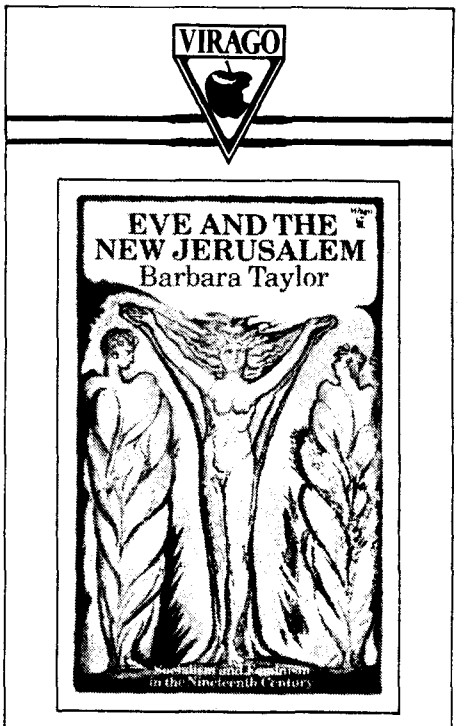
FICTION
Roger Lewis

Other people's letters

My Search for Warren Harding
ROBERT PLUNKET *Robin Clark* £8.95
Damballah
JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN *Allison & Busby* £7.95
Enderby's Dark Lady
ANTHONY BURGESS *Hutchinson* £7.95

Henry James spent his career trying to cope with the fact that the novelist is the most irresponsible of artists. *The Aspern Papers* is a remonstration with those who would pry into the private lives of people they do not know. Though apparently about an inquisitive scholar, its paradox is that James's own procedure as a novelist is exactly the same as a snoop's. Eavesdropping upon conversations, overhearing a character's self-communing, flitting from place to place with supernatural efficiency: novelists are, perhaps, the greatest spies of all.

My Search for Warren Harding is about exactly this dilemma but, instead of using



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Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century
has won the 1983
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James's reticence and irony, Robert Plunket's version of *The Aspern Papers* is a paranoiac Californian farce.

Jeffrey Aspern was in some measure based upon Lord Byron; the decrepit Miss Bordereau, guardian of his love-letters, an abandoned mistress. Realising that the dead seldom sue, Plunket has not bothered to convert Harding (America's least significant president, elected in 1921 and dying suddenly on a speech-making tour two years later) into an alias. The thesis of Elliot Weiner, the historian who narrates, is that the provincial politician was placed in the White House by the powerful society hostesses he befriended. His downfall was perhaps connected with the incipient scandal of his affair with Rebekah Kinney.

Elliot discovers that Miss Kinney is still alive, now a raddled crone cloistered in a mouldering Beverley Hills palazzo. If she can be persuaded to display any letters or diaries she might be storing, it will be a trove of incalculable proportions — especially for Elliot's career. 'She was the last Harding intimate left. She alone could refute all my meticulously thought-out theories. She alone knew the truth.' Likewise, in *The Aspern Papers*, James's hero in Venice finds 'the one living source of information that had been unheeded'.

Just as in James's story, the sleuth moves into the old lady's house and pays a punitive rent for the privilege. Elliot hires a dilapidated pavilion next to the empty swimming pool and, asked by a confidante how low he is prepared to stoop, answers: 'Lie? Listen, I'd rape and pillage to get my hands on those papers.' His wilful suspension of ethical scrupulosity is an echo of James: 'Hypocrisy, duplicity are my only chance. I am sorry for it, but for Jeffrey Aspern's sake I would do worse still.'

James's narrator proceeds to fake affection for Miss Tita, Miss Bordereau's niece, in the hope that she will become his confederate and aid access to the precious bundle of manuscript. Here, Elliot pretends to fall in love with the obese Jonica. Miss Tita is unprepossessing; her modern counterpart is parodically disgusting. Dull and uninformed beyond measure, she yet has a mesmerising slobbishness. She represents the delirious brainlessness of Californian life. It is a society of hopeless failures which invents for itself an evasive psychoanalytic gobbledegook instead of learning a little self-discipline. Hollywood is a factory production line turning out dreams of celebrity. It is loaded with rejects.

Unlike her stupid granddaughter, Rebekah Kinney is wiry and mean. She had cannily won Harding and used her charms to get her family nepotistically arranged sinecures. Even her criminally-inclined brother is mysteriously promoted at West Point. However, Harding was growing famous and his reputation could not be tainted with public knowledge of his affair. Rebekah, somewhat sniffily, betook herself to California and discovered herself to be pregnant. It is at this point that a voluminous correspondence developed. These are the letters Elliot wants.

He does indeed get to glimpse the papers. 'I read one letter, then another, then a third. No wonder she kept them under lock and key. They were filthy.' Miss Kinney, prone to 'palsied hikes and wanderings', totters at this moment into the room. '"You" she began in this growl that came from deep down in her throat. "You skunk".' This is coincident with the most famous moment in *The Aspern Papers*. James's hero is going through the contents of a bureau and Miss Bordereau appears and 'hissed out passionately, furiously, "Ah, you publishing scoundrel".' It is one of the most embarrassed, wincing moments in literature. We, as eager readers, are as culpable as the hero. *My Search for Warren Harding* is a marvellous literary homage. It uses its progenitor to considerable advantage and is much more than a witty skit.

Damballah is a collection of short stories which we are encouraged to consider 'as letters from home'. It is about the fortunes of a dynasty of negroes, each tale about a different member in which the lives of the others overlap. Formally, it is very clever and becomes an interlocking choral poem. To aid our passage, a genealogical catalogue is provided. Though the modernity of America beckons, magic and ancestral spirits are heard and oddly remembered. The characters gradually convene in the tenement of Homewood, an edifice of ladders and stairways. Here, people wander up and down, are seen from different vantages, grow old. They descend from Sybela Owens, who escaped slavery in 1859. Her name derives from the Greek Sybil: a priestess turned into a caged songbird. Descendants reenact her mythical plight.

Anthony Burgess's novels are about nothing except their own language. I read **Enderby's Dark Lady** in proof some months ago. For publication, a preface has been added in which the author claims that his character has an extra-novelistic life, like a personage out of Dickens. Killed off in 1974, perhaps he still lives? Nonsense. This is just an excuse to print some ephemera. It is all redolent of *Nothing Like the Sun* and a short story called 'The Muse' which once appeared in an anthology of sci-fi. □

RADIO
Peter Dormer

Down whose way?

AFTER A WEEK'S attentive listening to Radio 4 — attentive because I do not normally pause in washing dishes to write notes about what I am listening to — four points suggest themselves. First, that without the distraction of a face, a quirky eyebrow or a friendly smile, the words of politicians and spokespeople from the nether worlds of the bureaucracies have a substance unique to radio. Without pictures, but with the sound of the speaker's personality, the sleights of logic, the tactics for avoiding questions, the manoeuvres of obsequiousness tend to catch the ear. There is no party monopoly in this: hardly anyone wants to give a truthful answer, partly because it seems that hardly anyone believes in the integrity of the questioner or, rather, there is the frequent ploy of casting doubt on the integrity of the question so as to avoid answering it.

Second, if one had time — and notebook enough — one would become passably well-informed on foreign affairs, the Church (high, low and fruitcake varieties), developments in science, the home and the individual accomplishments of song birds. Third, Radio 4 is middle-aged, middle-class and middle-brow — but then there are so many of us about and our own Neil Kinnock is a worthy example. Fourth, Radio 4 understands and reflects the 'conservative' attitudes of middle England — attitudes that are despised or dismissed by politicians at their peril. Far from being the province of the Right, the values innate to Radio 4 are, I suspect, shared — irrespective of class or party allegiance — by a great many people.

The family is close to Radio 4's heart, and no doubt the followers of the channel's consumer, financial, educational and legal advice are leading sensible, thrifty lives. But Radio 4 can go deeper than that, as *Woman's Hour* frequently demonstrates. Far from being the voice of the county set taking a distant, dutiful interest in *the* poor or *the* unemployed, it tackles difficult, sensitive issues, frequently related to marriage and children, which are classless in their occurrence and importance to the individuals affected.

A few months ago *Woman's Hour* dealt with the unfairness and brutality of the situation in which wives have to barter sex with their husbands to get more housekeeping money (or any housekeeping money) or simply a semblance of peace and quiet. Last week there was an item dealing with the problems caused by the first baby. Sleepless nights are an obvious problem, as is the husband's assumption that, 'Now she's at home with the baby she can do all the housework'. A less commonly discussed matter was the husband's frequent ignorance of the fact that his wife might be

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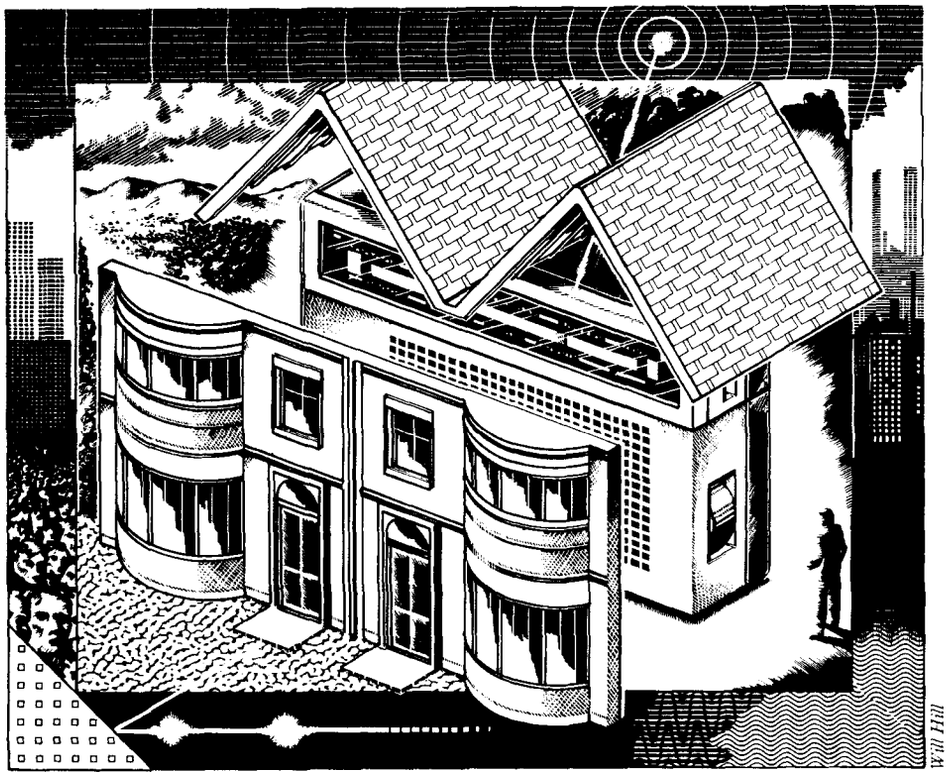
Will Hill

reluctant and sometimes physically unable to have sexual intercourse up to several months after the child's birth. Which is salutary. The fact that people do not talk even to each other at this level suggests that there is an unimaginable amount of fear about. On this particular item, men and women who had had difficulties but overcome them spoke straightforwardly and must have helped others to realise that their own difficulties are prosaic and often capable of being solved.

The aim of Radio 4's programming policy seems to be to deal informatively with a wide variety of those activities and interests through which different people derive their satisfactions. Setting the family aside, the interests include micro-computing, medicine and do-it-yourself. Interspersed with these and comedy, middle-of-the-road drama and classical music, there are long gobbets from politicians and spokespeople — *World At One*, *PM*, *The World Tonight*, *The World This Weekend*, *Tuesday Call* and *Any Questions*. And there is a credibility gap between what the politicos say and the commonsense and sometimes inspired knowledge that Everyman and Everywoman must possess — if, that is, Radio 4 has got its programming right.

Take last week's *Any Questions*. Tony Benn was entertaining and made a funny, vivid remark about the miners' pickets, the police and 'secondary policing'. And yet he was soon off into the generalisations and intangibles and sleights of concept — the world of political rhetoric in which ordinary people are strangers. He said the country was divided between the wealthy and the wealth creators and that it would only all come right when the principles of socialism were adopted. But where do you draw the line between the wealthy and the wealth creators? Which side of that line is Tony Benn on? And is there anywhere we can see a bit of a successful pre-run of the socialist principles he is on about? People who are not politicians — i.e. most of the people who listen to radio and watch television — are not inclined to be taken in by general plans. This is partly because in everyday lives we tend to take as a blueprint for action not our daytime imaginings but our practical experience — we know how long it takes to get things done, at what expense and with what compromises. We have also had 20 or 30 years of grand plans and seen the results, which are usually, predictably and humanly fourth-rate versions of the promises. The most devastating post-war disappointment is probably housing — a political muck-up all round. Ordinary people have to know how things will be done and who pays, and to try and foresee the minutiae, because their professions, trades, services and hobbies are the literal fabric of society — not the politicians' words. Yet, of course, those words form policy and so the listener's ears prick at the devious answers and all the little tactics which enable the politicians to keep the particular at bay only to leave it for someone else to pick up.

Possibly the most sensitive piece of journalism on Radio 4 last week was *The World This Weekend*'s interview with Sarah Tisdall's parents. The item was given enough time and had a measured enough pace to allow two ordinary (non-political) but very thoughtful people to give honest answers to questions which in themselves pose all manner of value judgments and moral concerns. It was impressive the way Drs Michael and Jennifer Tisdall distanced themselves from any sort of attack or rage against the *Guardian*. They knew the complexities of that paper's position and, unlike several politicians bouncing around like baboons on a trampoline, were not inclined to go for simplistic answers. The one faintly amusing thing to come out of the Tisdall affair was to hear William Deedes, Editor of the *Telegraph* and (I imagined) a self-appointed trustee of the English language, speak of the *Guardian*'s 'dilemma situation'.

But finally, of course, Radio 4 can be infuriating, especially when it insists on being picturesque or cosy or tendentious. *Down Your Way* is ghastly because it can never point to anything nasty. It would be like looking for dust and dirt in your host's house and commenting on it. The *Today* programme is so giggly that it is like school break with the boys smoking behind the bicycle sheds, and *Prayer for Today* and *Thought for Today* still get away with 'life is like a sardine tin' analogies. Last week someone compared life to a succession of house removals with death being the final move to the eternal house. That should make an interesting visit for the *Down Your Way* team. □

FILMS
John Coleman

Travesty

Yentl (PG)
Leicester Square Theatre
The South (U)
Academy Two
Reflections (15)
Chelsea Cinema
La Balance (18)
Screen on the Hill;
Classic, Tottenham Court Road

Stretching and distorting a 25-page story by Isaac Bashevis Singer to accommodate her unique blend of talent and temerity, Streisand's sentimental **Yentl** is anything but major Barbra. As director, producer, co-writer (with Jack Rosenthal) and rarely off-screen star she has laboured bravely, but under several misapprehensions. Perhaps her worst error has been to replace the magical matter-of-factness of Singer with a stream of forgettable songs (music by Michel Legrand, lyrics by Alan and Marilyn Bergman), supposedly expressing the inner turmoil, the agonies and ecstasies, of an East European Jewish girl at the turn of the century determined to broach the strictly male world of religious studies. When this Yentl, soon orphaned and masquerading as a young man, belts out 'Papa, Can You Hear Me?', for instance, it is at a pitch calculated to penetrate the deepest grave, unwittingly comical rather than pathetic. And something goes badly adrift with the switches from voice-over to singing to camera: why, in the name of likelihood, should Yentl — on a last boat out — warble mutely when solitary by the ship's rail, only to stride stridently through an apparently deaf throng of fellow-passengers?

This is not pettifoggery, if only because we desperately need to be persuaded that Barbra Streisand's Yentl can pass as knowledge-hungry 'Anshel', not merely to the extent of deceiving her partner-student Avigdor (Mandy Patinkin) but of doing him — when parentally rejected — the improbable favour of 'marrying' his submissive fiancée, Hadass (delightful Amy Irving). Mr Singer's Yentl was, after all, 'tall, thin, bony, with small breasts and narrow hips ... there was even a slight down on her upper lip'. All there is on the generous Streisand

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upper lip, and its lower companion, is pale lipstick. The film, one should acknowledge, is handsomely shot and mounted — by such experienced pros as photographer David Watkin and designer Roy Walker — and Prague looks great as Lublin; but this very attention to authenticity further militates against our suspension of disbelief. The atmosphere of 'fairy-tale' proposed by its one-woman begetter quite lacks. And so the deliberate elaboration of scenes of potential embarrassment and revelation — at the tailor's, sharing a bachelor bed with Avigdor, avoiding a nuptial one with Hadass (unfortunate name in the context) — are more or less heavily played for laughs. In fairness, there are a few moments of nicely contrived comedy, genuine warm humour. But elsewhere that all-too-womanish one woman confounds a plot which here has her 'wife' falling for her — what else? — and, with the spotlight forthrightly on her throughout, we have ample time to discern the steeliness behind Streisand/Yentl's yearnings, to find something willed in all that wistfulness. A Yentl-man she ain't.

Astonishing that ten years should have passed since Victor Erice's stylish *The Spirit of the Beehive*. His new — and only second — film, **The South**, is set in 1957, in a secluded house outside a small town in northern Spain, and has clear affiliations with the first: mysterious father, bewildered young daughter, a local cinema, an extended invitation to read between the images. As Estrella (finely controlled appearances by Sonsoles Aranguren and Iciar Bollan) grows from eight to 15, she learns from her balding, bearded doctor-father (Omero Antonutti) how to manipulate a magic pendulum, is taken dowsing, joyously dances with him at her first communion party, hears from a chatterbox old nurse visiting from the South with her paternal grandmama of his spell in jail for being on the right-wrong side in the civil war. Erice contrives the passage from little girl to teenager in what seems one stunningly held shot, the kid cycling away down an avenue of trees, an autumnal light-shift, suddenly the older lass returning on a motorised bike.

It is this Estrella who is as unexpectedly invited to lunch in a grand hotel by her more and more withdrawn father, where she is about to find answers to questions — about an enigmatic affair with a movie actress, in particular — pieced together from fleeting instants of past observation. A wedding celebration in the room yields the music they danced to years before. But father has drunk too much, goes to rinse his face; by the time he returns, the occasion for truth has gone. The whole film dispenses a kind of sad poetry of evanescence, impossible to do more than hint at: the child on a swing at night, wan mama calling for father from a window, a train that isn't taken, a fatality, another train at the close — to Estrella's longed-for South — that will be caught. In lesser hands this might register as wilful mystification. Erice keeps one guessing — and watching.

Kevin Billington's **Reflections**, scripted by John Banville from his own novella 'The Newton Letter', also has its puzzles and artful hesitations. Its principal character, William (Gabriel Byrne), who rents the lodge of a grand mansion in Southern Ireland for the summer to finish his book on Isaac Newton — from whom the same quotation, about the triviality of his achievements, occurs thrice — is much given to commending things thus: 'It's very . . .', 'He's very . . .', so that it comes as a helluva note when he manages once to enunciate, 'This is very... very *pleasant*.' At the big house there is attractive Charlotte (Fionnula Flanagan, asked to act stunned), her drunken, oafish husband (Donal McCann) and her bored niece Ottilie (Harriet Walter, and super). There is an unexplained, refractory small boy, too. William has an affair with eager Ottilie, rather falls for dazed Charlotte and generally comports himself like a prize bastard. And that, it transpires, is what all the allusive, broken-off snatches of dialogue and random action are leading up to: the simple fact that he is so bound up in himself he has misread the whys and wherefors of practically everything. A right old let-down. The piece, though, is very... very *pretty*.

La Balance, the second crime movie directed by Bob Swaim, an American expatriate in Paris, is a tough, respectably made and performed sort of cross-breed about the Brigades Territoriales, an undercover police outfit of SAS-like butchness, operating within and against *le milieu*, rather as if Lumet had deserted the mean streets of New York in favour of Belleville and hazy memories of *Quai des Brumes* and such. The title means 'informer' and the special cops, having lost one of their best and needing to get after the quarter's top gangster (Maurice Ronet, cool, with a thin moustache), proceed to set up a pimp, Dédé (puffy-eyed Philippe Léotard), in love — and living — with a whore, Nicole (Nathalie Baye, peculiarly cast), as reluctant replacement. It moves at a great, ingenious lick, but *three* French Oscars...? □

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ART
John Spurling

Exotica

The Orientalists
RA, until 27 May,
then Washington D.C.
Working with Colour
DLI Museum & Arts Centre, Durham, until 8 April, then Huddersfield, Hull, Stoke-on-Trent, Lincoln, Bristol, Eastbourne, Norwich, Preston, York, Sheffield

'Once upon a time, on an uninhabited island on the shores of the Red Sea, there lived a Parsee from whose hat the rays of the sun shone in more-than-oriental splendour.' The Orient of the 19th-century Orientalists was essentially the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. As the various pieces broke away they were acquired mainly by Britain and France, so it's hardly surprising that most of the artists in the RA's exhibition are British or French. The theme of 'Orientalism' in general — the European fascination with Arabs, harems, desert life, ancient Middle-Eastern civilisations, Islamic religion and society, Biblical survivals, bazaars, Caliphs and the rest — runs as richly through our 19th-century culture as that of mediaeval chivalry.

But although the RA's catalogue is a useful and stimulating introduction to the subject, the exhibition itself is disappointing. The artists are too disparate and the work shown mostly too mediocre to give any sense of coherence or penetration.

The organisers have clearly had problems. Seventeen paintings by various artists belonging to a private collection in Houston, Texas, were withdrawn after the catalogue went to press and although they have been gallantly replaced by 11 more from other collections, these inevitably come on as something of a scratch team. Furthermore, some of the most promising paintings in the catalogue — including a variant of Delacroix's famous *The Death of Sardanapalus*, all three of Jean-Antoine Gros's contributions and Matisse's revolutionary *Blue Nude* — are to be only shown in Washington.

The various forms Orientalism took, running in parallel with the prevailing art-historical developments of the period, from Romanticism through Realism to Impressionism and Modernism, are all represented, but on the whole there is a dearth of imagination and a surplus of topography.

The minor pleasures of the exhibition include: Tissot's Three Kings in yellow cloaks loping phlegmatically at the head of their column of camels out of a desert defile in true BedouWestern style; Edward Lear's numinous *Cedars of Lebanon;* Thomas Seddon's watercolour of Sir Richard Burton pretending to be a sheikh; J.F. Lewis's Durrellesque *Courtyard of the House of the Coptic Patriarch;* and Lecomte de Nouÿ's *The Guard of the Seraglio*, a row of heavily-armed and exotically-costumed blacks lying restlessly on a carpeted palace step while waiting to repel some 19th-century version of James Bond. The most striking work is a piece of pure fiction, *Odalisque and Slave,* by Ingres, who never set

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foot outside Europe. Otherwise, in the absence of any very momentous painting by Delacroix or Renoir, it is Matisse who makes the strongest impression with two highly-coloured landscapes and an odalisque in red trousers on a red ground.

The period covered by the exhibition ends after the First World War, with this odalisque and Augustus John's atrocious portrait of T.E. Lawrence, but our latest Orientalist can be seen at Durham, in the gallery above the museum of the Durham Light Infantry, whose battle honours appropriately include a successful brush with the Mahdi's dervishes in 1885, the year of Gordon's death in Khartum. Bridget Riley visited Egypt in 1981. Whatever she saw there in the way of bazaars, odalisques, camels and muezzins, she brought back only colours, the five strong colours used by the Ancient Egyptians: ultramarine, red ochre, green, turquoise and yellow ochre, together with white and black.

Her latest paintings, the 'Egyptian series', use these colours, or versions of them, in ways hardly envisaged by the Ancient Egyptians but for purposes not all that different. The Egyptians painted the insides of their tombs with the colours of their sky, earth, water and vegetation so that the dead could take with them, in addition to the objects they had used in life, a kind of portmanteau of the world of the living, its animation, its abundance and above all its brilliant sunlight.

Riley's whole career, in the wake of the great 19th- and 20th-century colourists, has been an attempt to capture the elusive effects of light and movement in the landscape and to recreate these transitory moments of seeing in the purest terms, without the intrusion of particular objects or forms. 'You can stare at a landscape,' she writes in this month's *Vogue*, 'which a moment ago seemed vibrant and find it inert and dull.' To use the Proustian analogy, she wants the taste of the madeleine dipped in tea and its open sesame to a labyrinth of remembered emotion, but she cannot achieve it through the illusory representation of a teacup and a French biscuit.

This touring exhibition, constructed around four of the recent large paintings, is an introduction to and explanation of her methods. There are a few early works to show the general direction she has always been following and then a detailed exposé (with experimental and often abortive sketches in gouache) of the intermediate stages by which she arrived at the finished oils. Robert Cumming's unusually considerate and helpful catalogue, with notes on the individual items, walks you round the exhibition almost as if you were in the company of the artist. Altogether it is an experience of more-than-oriental splendour. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

The rich, the nude and the famous

AWARD TIME again! Anything off the bottom shelf, guv'nor! Not only BAFTA, the wartime porridge substitute, but the Broadcasting Press Guild, whatever that is, has been singling out a few programmes that have already singled themselves out, among them *Brass, Rough Justice, Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and an ominous documentary about *Windscale* which distinguished itself by instantly coming true: perhaps the govt should receive a share in this last award?

It happened that *Rough Justice* had a follow-up report on one of its campaigns last week, **Verdict Unsafe** (BBC-1) in which the team followed the progress of Jock Russell, whom it had successfully sprung from maximum security prison where he had been serving a life sentence for a murder he hadn't committed. Russell was condemned to be 'buried alive', as he put it, on the strength of 22 grey hairs found clutched in the hand of student Alison Bigwood, none of them his. When Russell came out of prison he had a striking hairstyle, long pieces slicked down in front of his ears, but not a grey hair in sight.

'Money can't bring back those years,' he said, 'but I would settle for a million.' It seemed a modest enough sum, but the going price for seven years of this life is apparently £60,000. We saw his lawyer nervously advising against suing the police for malicious prosecution, while warning him that the authorities might try and reduce any ex gratia payment on the grounds that he had been out of work at the time of the murder he didn't commit. Charming things, humans.

Having engineered his release, the Justice team may have thought it had a right to his story, but one couldn't help thinking it was compounding the famous stigma of prison by offering us glimpses of an unhappy background — 'Father dead?' said Russell on the phone. 'Between you and me, mum, I won't miss him. In fact, I hated him, as you know' — which one could not but take as some kind of tele-logical explanation of something, but what? During the film's making, a wretched interim payment of £15,000 came through, the largest ever, we heard. Jock acquired a new look and a girlfriend of whom a friend didn't approve: 'She can be a bad influence,' he said. 'She used to sniff glue.' Used to, you'll note.

Ian La Fresnais, one half of the team who wrote *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, is script editor on **The Other 'Arf** (ITV). My guess is they showed the script to his dog while he was away in Los Angeles. Connoisseurs of the ghastly should on no account miss this unpretentious two-hander starring John Standing and Lorraine Chase.

One glance at the pair is enough to tell you they were not made for each other, in or out of the series. Standing sulks throughout. Chase, clad in amusing Cockney 'tat' and made up to look like a skull in a hairpiece, delivers what are supposed to be devastating one-liners with exactly the same intonation she used in the Luton Airport scam that brought her fame. The acting is so discouraged that it amounts to little more than the odd italicising of a word. Chase: 'You mean you're now gonna *kill* our little woolly lambs?' Standing: 'Well, it *is* preferable to eating them alive, *isn't* it?' Oh it certainly is, Mr Standing. Keep up the good work!

EVER SINCE one of them presented his bare bottom to the Queen at a welcome ceremony one has suspected that the Maoris were becoming restless. In **The New Dawn** (BBC-2) Michael Dean turned his own bottom on the country of his birth, which he refers to as 'a sanatorium of sun and butter, the English dream of suburbia in the south seas'.

The Maoris reached the land of the white cloud 1,000 years before Cooke arrived and offered them peace in return for it. I didn't know New Zealand had been covered in rain forests once. Those had to go, of course, in favour of 'short grass that has to be attacked', 'a cloven-footed culture' as the Maoris aptly call it. Land confiscated 40 years ago for an air base that was never built has been handed back to them, but they will have to pay $9,000 compensation.

'We have no fair court to look at the injustice of my people,' said the daughter of a Maori general who fought at Gallipoli. The NZ govt was 'the greatest propaganda machine outside South Africa'. Loss of land, coupled with a growing population of urban poor, has created an explosive mix. Fifty per cent of prison inmates come from 12 per cent of the population. 'It's only a short time before the young Maoris start buying weaponry.'

One hour of **Shadows from Light** (C4) was more than enough in which to celebrate the celebrity-crammed life of photographer Bill Brandt, a graduate of the French 'surrealist' movement.

Stephen Dwoskin did everything in his power to turn this 'cinematic journey through photographic atmospheres' into a major cultural event — wilful foreshortenings and melodramatic white-outs seen in mirrors and through bits of furniture — but the overall effect was of a man of average taste kitted out with one of our greatest inventions running fast after fashions and the famous: 'Close-up of Picasso's left eye', etc. I wondered if the famous were more 'surreal' than the rest of us.

Susan Sontag was used to shore up the photos' crumbling aesthetic: 'No activity is better equipped to reveal the surrealist way of looking and eventually you see all photography surrealistically.' Was this Sontag's way of praising an art in which all the girls are whited-out meat or a criticism of its trivialising and cannibalistic tendencies?

Her remarks were tinged with just the right amount of blinding obviousness to satisfy the highest standards: 'The force of a photograph is that it keeps open to scrutiny instants which the normal flow of time instantly replaces.' By Jove! She's right, you know! You can go on looking at these snaps of the rich, the nude and the famous till you're blue in the face and they will still seem strangely monotonous to anyone but an American. □

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THEATRE
Christopher Edwards

Ambition's debt

Black Mas
JOHN CONSTABLE *New End*
The Hungry Ghosts
C. P. LEE *Old Red Lion*

Foco Novo presents John Constable's first play — a heavily symbolic drama set in Trinidad during the Carnival. In a play of some density, Constable offers a potent clash of sexes and races, exploiting the occasion of festival to introduce ritual exorcism, voodoo trance and play-acting and to combine them into a kind of resolution.

Rose Lorraine, rock singer, and Jimmy Reed, manager, are first heard abusing a mob of black revellers before they stagger through the doors of a very shady hotel — the inner regions of Rose's scanty leather costume having attracted too many groping hands for even her tolerant nature. The sense of greedy sensual licence 'out there' lends the hotel a (temporary) feeling of refuge.

Rose and Jimmy meet Roy — engaging, hustling black proprietor of Hotel Thread — and then Marduke who, after his allusive arrival dressed as Death, emerges as a rich, white, patois-speaking land-owner with a gun in his pocket because he hopes to catch his wife with her black lover. He falls for Rose (a bristling, sparky performance by Carole Harrison) and antagonises Jimmy whose free-wheeling, non-possessive attitude to Rose thinly protects a jealous unease.

Having drawn his lines of conflict, Constable then tangles them up again, with the choric Roy (withdrawing into this role after a few skirmishes with Rose) weaving tales about 'Anancy', trickster spider and 'popular West African folk hero', symbolising the struggle for freedom.

One thing I didn't work out was whether Rose — referred to as 'white meat' — stood for the fly in this web. Anyway, she, Jimmy and Marduke, to the sound of Roy's rhythmic drum, exorcise a degree of fear and loathing in role-playing and incantatory trances before the violence of the end of the play. Roland Rees's direction produces several highly charged scenes out of this top-heavy but ambitious piece.

PART ONE of C.P. Lee's thin comic number is set in Manchester in 1966. Three truant schoolgirls sit in a pub waiting for a sight of a heart-throb rock star. Period detail is carefully planted — hair-bands, short skirts, references to Cathy McGowan, *Ready Steady Go* and boyfriends who look like Ilya Kuryakin.

Jean (Michele Winstanley in a promising theatre debut) is coolly analytical of what lies in store for everyone except herself . . .job as a secretary to bring in enough money to buy clothes and then marriage to some boy who's just completed an apprenticeship. Mary is engagingly cynical about survival — find some dim man who'll take you out, buy you clothes, buy you fags, and do whatever he's told to. The embodiment of this vision is Lambreter Brian (Mark Aspinall) whom she shoves about to the amazed glee of her friends.

Lastly, there is safe, predictable Pauline who listens to her mum and thinks Vietnam is a pop group. Everyone knows what sort of future she has in store.

Switch to 1977. The same pub and here are Jean and Mary, both housebound and child-ridden despite their insights of 11 years back. Pauline, however, breezes in as the local celebrity, autographing photographs of herself; she has slept her way to the post of telly presenter on Granada and bestows patronising charm on her old schoolmates along with cries of 'marvellous', 'darling', 'come and visit my converted mill', etc.

It is her absurd TV-personality patter and the stupefaction of her friends that form the basis of the laughs of part two, and Kathy Burke delivers a pretty entertaining, outrageously outsized send-up of affectation. But the piece goes for (and gets) easy laughs and offers little more than a cute anecdote.

In fairness, the author doesn't seem to claim much more, as evidenced by his tongue-in-cheek appeal for hand-crafted lines, scenes or monologues to help him discover what happens to his characters in part three. □

JAZZ
Charles Fox

Wide angle

Camden Jazz Week
Logan Hall

Owning up to a taste for jazz can still invite misunderstanding. From being a matter, around the late 1940s, of the girl in the next seat confiding that she too liked Pee Wee Hunt's 'Twelfth Street Rag', the scope has widened to take in affinities with a dancer from Spanish Harlem spinning on his bum like a top, a trombonist in orange trousers decorated with red, green and blue checks prancing across the stage while singing rock lyrics, and a Brazilian who struck, plucked and stroked something that looked like an archer's bow with a gourd on the end. All were to be encountered during Camden Jazz Week. All were, in their different ways, satisfying.

Thursday night provided the nearest thing to what used to be the status quo, when two tenor saxophonists jousted in public. Johnny Griffin from Chicago, spruce and alert, is famous for scattering notes as lavishly as if he were feeding pigeons in Trafalgar Square. Arnett Cobb, propped up on crutches throughout, has the big sound of a Texan tenor player, voluptuous and serpentine where Griffin sprinted. Quotes popped up (Griffin threw in references to the 'Donkey's Serenade', 'Lester Leaps In', 'Rhapsody in Blue' and 'The Song Is You' within just a handful of choruses on 'I Got Rhythm'); exuberance could become a trifle forced. But when Cobb embarked on a slowish —especially a blues—number, his phrasing surged and swayed, recalling the way that Ben Webster used to echo Johnny Hodges.

The night before should have produced the highspot of the week, a dialogue between Max Roach, the greatest living jazz drummer, and the South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (still better known by his original name, Dollar Brand). But Roach had to fly to America for an operation. His place was taken by the

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saxophonist Sam Rivers, whose alternating of jagged clusters and smoothly melodic passages was brilliant but disconcerting. If he sounded more fallible when playing flute, it should be remembered that the two men had never performed together before walking on-stage that night. Among the pieces they busked was an eloquent version of Duke Ellington's 'In a Sentimental Mood' and — suitably pungent — Thelonius Monk's 'Well, You Needn't'. Occasionally, too, Ibrahim would reveal how marvellously light his playing can be, falling like a benison, before swelling to the musical equivalent of a Gothic nave.

Having written in these columns at length about both John Surman and the Gamelin Trio, your reviewer played truant on the Monday evening, only to be told that the British musicians in particular had surpassed themselves. But patriotism could be indulged in at almost every performance. On Thursday, for instance, the Ian Stewart/John Picard band played mostly blues with a front-line of two tenor saxophones and two trombones. Picard remains an under-rated but truly inventive soloist. The other trombonist, Mike Hogh, sounded slightly more traditional and also looked much as Jack Teagarden must have done when he was one of Peck Kelley's Bad Boys.

Britons also provided support — on Friday — for Ted Curson, a trumpeter who once participated in some of Charles Mingus's greatest triumphs. Curson performed excitingly, if untidily, even throwing in a headlong version of 'Night in Tunisia'. Behind him Don Weller, wearing a geranium-red cap, played tenor saxophone with authority, while a taut-looking Bryan Spring confirmed that he is probably the most intense and subtle drummer to emerge in Britain since Phil Seamen.

That gesture of Anglo-American cooperation was followed by a set from Steps Ahead, full of good musicians — Mike Maineri (vibes), Mike Brecker (tenor saxophone), Eddie Gomez (bass) — yet sounding like a rerun of 1950s West Coast Jazz, plus rock drumming and a synthesizer. It bored in the way that very formal art can once it becomes too conscientious.

Brasher, much further away from what most people think of as jazz, was the music of the Slickaphonics, led by the trombonist in orange trousers, Ray Anderson, who once had the unusual distinction of having his records barred — because they were allegedly just 'noise' — from the review columns of a British jazz magazine. On Saturday evening the former avant-gardist danced expertly, thumped conga drums and sang, as well as blowing lustily. The music was tight, staccato in a way that aligned it more with rock than most jazz buffs would tolerate.

Saturday, though, was when nonconformity broke in everywhere. Bands played mixtures of high-life, reggae and Latin-American jazz to audiences that danced as well as listened. No homegrown dancers, though, came anywhere near the five macho young men who made up Magnificent Force, rotating, contorting, performing breath-taking break-dance routines to music provided by Nana Vasconcelos, a virtuoso on various exotic instruments as well as able to slap his hands upon chest and hips and buttocks and make it sound like a tabla solo. All as alive and dazzling as music and dance can be — which is more than one used to be able to say about 'Twelfth Street Rag'. □

FIRST PERSON

Alison Hennegan

Wed lock

LITERACY'S VERY HARD on the health. It can't be good for me to live my life in a low buzzing hum of fury caused by other people's incautious sentences scattered through my daily reading.

Try this one for size. It came from a recent *TLS* but, true to my current endeavour to school my soul to rise above *ad feminam* arguments, I shan't name the reviewer. 'Marriage,' said this nameless She, confidently, 'has become a context, not a condition: in that sense we are all spinsters now.'

Now, possibly, I told myself, she'd simply succumbed to alliteration (not, let's face it, a fault which *I* can too ferociously condemn). But suppose she meant it, *believes* it...? It was then that the red spots danced before my eyes and I felt that old familiar throbbing at the temples. Two aspirins, lots of Telemann and 50 minutes later, I returned, warily, to see if the sentence still made me just as angry. It did.

The formula itself ('We are all x now') is invariably an offensive one, used by speakers who suspect that a group from which they feel — or are — excluded has a superior moral, political or social position. Asserting membership of the group — or so changing its definition that it includes the speakers — gives them claim to the superior position otherwise denied them.

On the face of it, the *TLS* quotation seems to overturn that analysis. 'Spinster' is not, in recent history, a word often laden with positive and enviable associations. Far from it: for about a century and a half it was a cue for sniggering contempt or painful sympathy, the word which above all defined a woman who had failed in the one thing deemed to matter: securing a male mate, marrying him and, preferably, bearing him children.

Strange, then, that the *TLS* reviewer used 'spinster' as she did. Even stranger, given that the word itself is dying. Today it has a slightly period air: we'd be far more likely to say 'single woman'. And *that* phrase doesn't carry any automatic contempt. Indeed, it's as likely to signify such currently approved virtues as self-sufficiency; financial independence; self-determination; the ability to plan the use of time, energy and movement without preliminary reference to marital obligations.

And that, perhaps, is the key. If we rewrite the *TLS* phrase to read 'in that sense we are all single women now', my analysis of the formula holds. The writer claims for married women inclusion in a group which, by definition, excludes them. And she does so, I suggest, because while she knows that in a feminist context marriage is rightly suspect, she nevertheless wishes to assert that marriage leaves wives quite as free as the recently upgraded single woman.

Which makes me very cross. Mainly because it isn't true.

Marriage is defined by — not simply located in — a mass of laws regulating legitimacy, property, inheritance, tax and sexual access; and that's just for starters. To some, all that may be merely 'a context'. To me it sounds suspiciously like a context created by and dependent upon 'a condition'.

Marriage is not some incidental, accidental or morally neutral state which a woman enters in an absent-minded moment — as though one Saturday morning she mistook the Registrar's office for Sainsbury's and came out with a marriage certificate instead of half a dozen tins of cat food. Consenting to marry means consenting to acknowledge the state's right to ratify our supposedly oh-so-private sexual and emotional lives. It means actively *seeking* its ratification.

Similarly there's nothing accidental about my unmarried state. I chose it and, over the years, have thought and worked hard to resist the traditional invitation to despise it, belittle it and leave it. I'm a 'Miss' not a 'Ms' and those who really know me take pains to address their envelopes accordingly. And if any of you are bursting to remind me that the whole point of 'Ms' is to bring women titular equality with men, please — although I'm sure you're only trying to be helpful — *don't*. Yes, of course it's an example of the sexual double standard that 'Mrs' means married whereas 'Mr' might or might not. But it's marriage itself which does most to enshrine and perpetuate that double standard. The only honest reason for abandoning the titles 'Mrs' and 'Miss' would be that the institution which demanded them had gone.

Perhaps to you this all sounds like some eccentric rant. Or, as a straight male friend said to me recently, with a wary gentleness, 'Sometimes I think you don't realise how marginal your life and preoccupations are.'

But what marginalised them, I ask myself, and, more to the point, what marginalised that long, passionate tradition in which women have pin-pointed marriage as the main agent of their suppression? It's not just the Wollstonecrafts and Martineaus who've offered us their experience. So many 'ordinary' women through the centuries have tried to tell us — in voices becoming audible again in the minutiae of social history retrieved for us by feminist and socialist historians.

So why do we keep forgetting, keep ignoring, keep pretending that, for *us*, it will all be different? How much longer must we read autobiographies where feminists of the calibre of Ann Oakley and Robin Morgan attempt to justify marriage in paeans which they then so qualify and counter-qualify that the overall impression is of deepest unease?

And please, doctor, how much longer do I have to keep on taking the headaches? □

Alison Hennegan was literary editor of Gay News; *she now works for The Women's Press.*

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WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2815 **Set by Ms de Meaner**

A Withered Nosegay, published this week by Methuen, includes three long-out-of-print 'Cod Pieces' by Noel Coward. One, 'Spangled Unicorn' (1932), is a slim anthology of work by imaginary poets, complete with brief biographies. The publishers have most kindly offered copies of the book as additional comp. prizes; all you have to do to win one is to invent a brilliantly apt poet for our times — providing up to 50 words of potted biog. plus up to ten lines of his or her verse, by April 13.

No 2812 **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Princess Anne visits a transport caff.

Report **By Al Dente**

The meeting of two stereotypes is obviously not the most fruitful of dramatic situations. There was a dearth of good jokes and apt tones of voice. What did stand out from your entries was the frequent employment of the Yorkie bar as a psycho-socio-sexual signifier. Seven pounds for each winner ought to see you through about half-a-dozen cups of take-away tea + VAT.

(A cafe somewhere off the M4. HRH, with mug of tea, approaches a seated driver.)

HRH: Shift your bum, John. Some of us need a rest.
Driver (*Moving*): Sorry. Is that better?
HRH: It'll do, John. Only don't blame me if I rub up against your Yorkie. Know what I mean?
Driver: Excuse me but I believe you've just placed your mug on my Open University unit.
HRH: What's that, John?
Driver: Your mug. It's on my unit.
HRH: Oops! Sounds nasty.
Driver: Honestly! One expects a little more respect from companions of the road.
HRH: Me mug's gotta go somewhere, ain't it, John?
Driver: And my name's not John. It's Gareth.
HRH: Oh yeah? You probably know my brother. He's the Prince of you Wallies. 'Ere, Taff. Look at this. A bacon sarnie with no grease. Like a crown with no bleedin' jewels, that is.
Driver: Really?
HRH: It's like I thought. This is a right naff caff, Taff.

N. J. WARBURTON

'Princess Anne? No problem, squire,' said Len. 'Get all sorts in here. Strict precedence. None of these snotty little baronets creeping up the queue before Dukes of the Blood Royal like what you get at the Ritz. Nuffink like that, squire.

'Very democratic, Anne was. "Call me Annie," she says, "none of this bowing and scraping, Marm this, Marm that. And sod putting *God Save* on the bleeding jukebox every time I comes in," she says.

' "Annie," I says, "I wish I had your job, girl." "How come?" she says. "All that lovely lolly," I says, "just for opening of a few flower shows and that."

'Then she turns nasty. "Get that jukebox playing," she says, "or I'll see you in the Tower. Show a bit of respect," she says. "Down on your knees, dog." And the bleeding Archbishop choked on his kipper and laughed fit to bust his chasuble.'

J. J. MALING

Princess Anne (*entering transport caff in dungarees and Harrods scarf*): Don't get up, chaps. (*To counter-women*) No need to curtsy. A cup of Earl Grey will do. Is that pie fresh?
1st Woman: What the 'ell you on about?
2nd Woman: Who does she think she is?
Men at tables look up from reading.
1st Man: You gettin' some aggro from that stuck-up tart, Edna? (*To Anne*) Keep a civil tongue in yer 'ead, you!
Anne: Naff off!
1st Man: Oo you fuckin' well tellin' to naff off?
Anne: Don't you know who I am?
1st Man: I don't give a monkeys who you are. Nobody speaks to Edna like that. Me neither.
2nd Man: Not even Royalty . . .
Anne: But one is. Princess Anne, actually.
1st Man: That explains it. Give the poor cow a cuppa, Edna. She don't know no better.

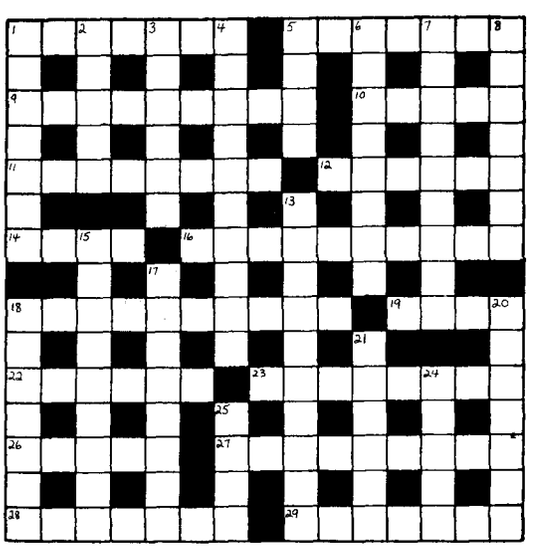
MAY DAY

(*Scene: Caff. Princess Anne, in dungarees, enters.)*
Anne: Fark me! It's pissing dine.
Caff Proprietor: Beg pardon?
Anne: I'm farking soaked.
C.P.: Tea?
Anne: Yarss — and a box of Yorkie bars.
George (*a customer*): 'Ere, Fred, isn't that 'Er Royal 'Ighness, Princess Anne?
Fred (*another customer*): Never 'eard of 'er.
George: You know — what swears at photographers.
Fred: Well, I swear at photographers — awkward bastards with cameras and light meters (*rambles on*) . . .
George (*to Anne*): Your Royal 'Ighness, this is a great privilege — let me buy your tea.
Anne (*kneeing George in the groin*): Piss orff you revolting little man.
George (*in pain*): Fred — ohhh — she kneed me — ooooh — in the nuts — 'Er Royal 'Ighness — orghh — Princess Anne, 5th in line to the throne — oh — kneed me in the bollocks — ooh — I'll never wash my balls again.

GEOFF HORTON

Weekend Crossword 1435

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1435, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 10 April.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

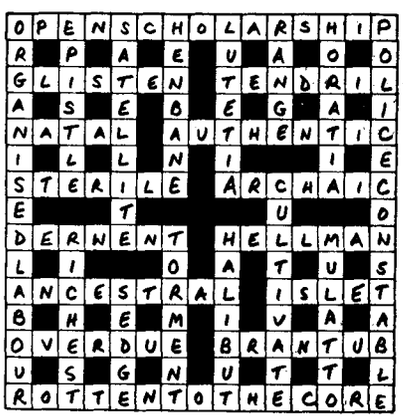
1. Scattered patrol caught in defensive mechanism (7)
5. The reverse of abused and set free (7)
9. Space between me and stone gives something to shout through (9)
10. Adding a fifty to a hundred in sound (5)
11. So trades are rearranged and classified (8)
12. So this strait would be restraining (6)
14. Lots of games are suitable for television (4)
16. Town almost entirely inhabited by commuting workmates (10)
18. Thought the opposing team dangerous looking (10)
19. Money for page and fairy (4)
22. Silent actor (6)
23. Prepare for fight to get me back a town (8)
26. Woman in a hotel returning east (5)
27. Blanket as used in a pantomime (9)
28. Struggled with a man after his lusts have been stirred up (7)
29. Tester of a piece of embroidery (7)

DOWN

1. Keep company with politician and fool — it enables one to get around (7)
2. African place starts growing in an eastern country (5)
3. Account for noise (6)
4. The qualities of respectable relationships (10)
5. Rush up as an animal (4)
6. Protestant who is strangely neutral about the initiation of holiness (8)
7. Sleepy person who gives the forwards success before the game is up (3,6)
8. The girl in fresh make-up to give new flame (7)
13. Goodies given us in class by unruly mates (10)
15. Beliefs about people making dwellings (9)
17. The team from Madrid is composed of stars (8)
18. Agreement in the bag (7)
20. Poet spotter (7)
21. The old man has the girl's backing throughout (6)
24. Fish uncooked in the middle (5)
25. Be in time although not up yet (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1433



Prizewinners to 1433

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He or she will report to the Editorial Advisory Panel on editorial matters and to the National Executive Committee on business and publicity matters through the Director of Publicity. Although the magazine is published by the Labour Party, it is editorially independent.

Applicants are expected to be NUJ and Labour Party members. They should have extensive practical journalistic experience, a wide range of contacts on the left of British politics, and the management ability to lead the magazine through the testing time of transition from bi-monthly to monthly.

The editor will be employed on a fixed term contract for eighteen months in the first instance.

Further details and application forms are available from **The Administrative and Personnel Officer, The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT** (tel. **01-703 0833**) and should be returned by **Thursday, 12 April 1984**. The Labour Party is an equal opportunities employer.

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LISTINGS

FRI 30 MARCH

LONDON 'The Price of Coal: 1984 Miners Strike' Public Meeting. Spkrs Yorkshire NUM and Revolutionary Communist Party. 7.30pm Holborn Library, Theobalds Rd, WC1. **Org RCP, BM RCP, London WC1V 6XX.**

GLASGOW 'Paint the Town Red' Festival until Sunday. Details/tickets Mitchell Theatre (Moir Hall) Graville St. **Org Scottish Socialist Soc.**

SAT 31 MARCH

BRADFORD 'End British collaboration with Apartheid! Victory to ANC & SWAPO!' Demo. 1pm Manningham Pk, bring banners. **Org Bradford Anti-Apartheid Grp, c/o Starry Plough Bookshop, 6 Edmund St, Bradford 5.**

HUCKNALL European Elections Day School. Spkr Stuart Holland MP. 10.30am. Collieries Welfare Club, Portland Rd. **Org Labour Party.**

LONDON Labour Housing Grp meeting. Spkrs John Fraser MP, Chris Smith MP. 10.15am-5.30pm Central London Poly, New Cavendish St, W1. **Org Labour Party.**

LONDON Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign public meeting with spkrs from Nicaragua. 2-5pm Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, NW1. **Org NSC, 20-21 Compton Terr, N1. 01-359 8784.**

EAST HAM 'Repression—Culture & Resistance' Day Festival 12.30pm-10.30pm Kensington Youth Centre, Wordsworth Ave, E12. **Org Newham Campaign Against Police Bill, c/o 285 Romford Rd, Forest Gate, E7 9HJ. 01-555 3331.**

LONDON 'Right to a Home' Conf. on Socialist Housing Policy. 10.30am-5pm Central London Poly. New Cavendish St, W1. Spkrs: Chris Holmes, John Fraser, Peter Kellner, Chris Smith. **Org Labour Housing Grp, Geoff Randall, 4 Fawley Rd, NW6.**

MON 2 APRIL

LONDON London History Workshop Seminar 'Social Insecurity and the National Past'. Spkr Patrick Wright. 7.30pm, The Plough, Museum St, WC1.

TUES 3 APRIL

BRIXTON Unite to Fight Racism & Imperialism. 8pm Brixton Library, SW2. **Org South London Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! BM Box 4835, WC1N 3XX.**

LONDON 'History of the Voice' Edward Kamau Brathwaite; 'African Culture in Cuba' Rogelio Martinez Fure; 'Adult Literacy in Kano' Umaru Aji. 11-5pm Rm. 639 (level 6) Inst. of Education, 20 Bedford Way, WC1. **Org Centre for Multi-cultural Education/ 3rd International Radical Black & Third World Bookfair.**

LONDON 'Day Care — where next?' conf. org by National Childcare Campaign 9.45-1pm National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakely St, N1. To book creche and register (fee £2) **Ruth Fisk, Conf. Organiser, NCCC, 75 Kingsway, WC2.**

WED 4 APRIL

LONDON 'Capitalism, Skill, GLC's training programme' conf. of Socialist Economists discn. Spkrs John Fairley, Sue Himmelweit, GLC Economic Policy grp. 8pm The Wheatsheaf, Rathbone Place, W1.

ROEHAMPTON 'Fight Local Health Cuts' — Emergency meeting called by Health Unions, Community Groups, Putney Labour Party to protest against cuts in Roehampton, Richmond, Twickenham Health Authority area. Spkrs Michael Meacher, Amy Berkshire, Peter Hain. 7.30pm Christian Community Centre, Minstead Gdns, off Danebury Ave, Roehampton, SW15. **Details: Putney Labour Party 01-788 8961.**

THURS 5 APRIL

MUSWELL HILL 'Civil Defence' spkr. David Andrews. 8pm Tetherdown Hall, Tetherdown, N10. Adm. free. **Details: J. Morley 01-889 0571.**

SAT 7 APRIL

LONDON 'The Future of Community Involvement in Penal and Police Institutions' day conf. 10.30am-4pm 20 Bloomsbury Way, WC1. Adm. £2/50p unwaged. **Org Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice, 103a Archel Rd, W14. 01-328 8741.**

KENT Conf. convened by Kent County Council NALGO and Kent Trade Union Alliance. 2 pm Community Hall, Beechings Way, Twydall, Gillingham. Spkrs incl. Nick Bradley, Area Officer, NUPE. **Details: Reg Humphreys, Kent NALGO Branch Office, County Hall, Maidstone. 671411.**

FORTHCOMING

9 APRIL LONDON South London Labour Cttee. on Ireland Public Meeting. Spkrs incl Lord Tony Gifford QC, Richard Balfe MEP. 7.30pm County Hall, Westminster Bridge, SE1.

9 APRIL LONDON 'Keep the GLC working for London' Rally with Ken Livingstone 7.30pm Porchester Hall, Porchester Rd, W2.

13 APRIL WAKEFIELD Anti-nuclear rally 7.30pm Unity Hall. Adm. 50p. **Details: Jim & Sally Whitman 0924 361490.**

13-15 APRIL HARLECH 'Peace Movements: Past & Present' conf. **Details: Llafur (Soc. for study of Welsh Labour History) & Coleg Harlech. Neil Evans, 0766 780363/780767 eves.**

14-15 APRIL NOTTINGHAM 'Disarmament and Independent Foreign Policy for Britain' discn. conf. at Nottingham University. **Details: Anne Kestenbaum, Bernard Russell Peace Fdn. 0602 708318.**

16-18 APRIL BRIGHTON 3-day conf. 'Race, Gender and Class'. **Bookings and details: Mike Cole, A Block, Brighton Polytechnic, Falmer BN1 9PH. 0273 606622.**

19 APRIL DUDLEY 'Carry Greenham Home' Public Meeting with Greenham Women and new film. 7.30pm The Swan, Castle Street. **Org CND.**

21 APRIL HOLY LOCH, Dunoon. Scottish CND Rally 11am Alexandra Parade. March to US submarine base. Spkrs at Rally Black Park, Dunoon 2.30pm Prof. Mike Pentz. **Details and transport: 041 331 2878.**

21 APRIL EDZELL, Angus. Scottish CND Rally 11.30am Edzell Base, March to Edzell Park. Spkr at 2.30pm Bruce Kent. **Details and transport: 041 331 2878.**

27-29 APRIL SWINDON 'Learning from experience in a Therapeutic Community', Lower Shaw Farm. Fee: £60 Assoc. of Therapeutic Communities membs/£65 non membs. **Details & application: Jeff Roberts 01-693 4014.**

12 MAY LONDON 'Beyond Poor Images' discn. and exhibition 10.30am-1pm City University, EC1. Tickets £2/£1 unwaged from **Child Poverty Action Grp. Alan Booth, 1 Macklin St, WC2 01-242 3225.**

14 MAY GLASGOW Housing the Frail Elderly conf. Walton Conference suite, Southern General Hospital. **Details: Melina McGarry, Age Concern Scotland, 33 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DN. 031-225 5000/1.**

16-21 JULY NEWCASTLE Third International Seminar on tertiary educational and staff development at Newcastle Polytechnic. Co-operative format, action learning. **Details/Registration BY APRIL: Chris de Winter Hebron, Humanities Faculty, Lipman Bldg, Newcastle Polytechnic 0632 612181.**

27-29 JULY NOTTINGHAM Shelter Annual Housing Conference University of Nottingham. **Details: Tim Mars, Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, SE1 8FX. 01-633 9377.**

28 JULY-5 AUG 'On yer bike for Peace!' sponsored ride from London to Barrow (home of Trident manufacture), via military bases. Total distance 450 miles. Details and entry forms from **Org Dulwich CND, 47A Thornton Ave, Streatham Hill, London SW2 4BD.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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A MIXED BUNCH of friends (28-32, m/f), who want to be happier more often, would like to get together with other people, in an atmosphere that is more fun, less exclusive and causes less embarrassment than conventional options. Cut the crap! What we're trying to say is that we are all hoping for relationships — so let's all get together. Cynics considered. Box 7969.

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BORED REDBRICK, university barrister-criminologist, lively 52, considering 'early retirement' on (just) liveable pittance, seeks ideas for use of remaining 0-30+ years. Enjoys hard work, people, sailing, travel, reading, TV, music, sex, food, drink, &c. Over-self-conscious, under-self-confident, about *averagely nice-nasty. All suggestions, sensible* or otherwise, gratefully acknowledged. Box 7954.

CAMBRIDGE: LIVELY, attractive woman, musician, middle-aged, divorced, wide interests, sense of humour, seeks male companionship. Box 7985.

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DO WRITE: if you would enjoy the company of a special friend; one who would give warmth, support, love, respect, joy, in return for the *same. Then, if you are female, I can maybe look* forward to meeting you, and discovering new interests? I'm male, 33, graduate, tall, unattached, not unattractive, (Taurus); and I spend far too much time playing with my pet barge! (traditional narrowboat), while any remaining energies go into various musical activities. Well, before Spring tip-toes by, and another glorious English Summer blooms (??!), why not put a few thoughts on paper and I'll try to bend my mind around a reply. (London area). Box 7989.

FEMALE, 29, outgoing, independent, interested in politics, reading, arts seeks good-humoured man, with same interests for easy-going relationship. (London-based). Box 7973.

GENUINE LOVER of Bach and children, non-smoker, seeks aware, loyal, gentle woman, 30s-40s, for Barbican Easter Festival. Tickets already held, conversation, countryside, permanence. Box 7974.

GRADUATE, FEMALE, very early 30's, attractive, interested in travelling, music and the arts, seeks graduate, 40-45, for friendship/marriage. London area. Box 7947.

GREEK PROFESSIONAL MAN, 38, single, interested politics, reading, music, theatre, films, seeks attractive, sensual woman to share friendship, love and interests. Photos appreciated. London. Box 7874.

HAPPY, VIRILE male, 35, seeks attractive, interesting woman, to share relaxed, affectionate, uncomplicated, loving relationship. Free mainly daytimes but flexible. Photo, phone number appreciated. Box 7968.

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INDEPENDENT, WORKAHOLIC female, 29, home-loving, fun-loving, into animals and children, seeks male, Yorkshire area, for loving, caring relationship. Box 7945.

JEWISH MAN, 30, 5'4", *non-smoker,* interests: music, travel, theatre and conversation, seeks woman for London outings and friendship. Personality more important than looks. Box 7948.

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LADY, 43, loves books, jazz, conversation, seeks warm-hearted man with sense of humour, for friendship and perhaps loving, lasting relationship. Box 7983.

LET ME make your Spring special. ME — professional man, 47, div., tall, lean, fit, sensuous, pleasant bearded features, easy-going, humorous well-groomed style. Interests: classical music, theatre, books, *travel, human interaction and laughter. YOU* — 35-45, tall, shapely, warm, feminine, cultured (graduate?). SE England/anywhere. Photo appreciated. Box 7961.

LONDON MAN, 32, seeks Springtime adventure (and maybe more) with wise woman, who might and might not share his addictions to fine wine, good food and modern jazz. Box 7955.

MALE, MANCHESTER university lecturer, 47, disengaging from present relationship, would like more female friends, attached or unattached, preferably educated non-smokers. Any local ladies replying, with or without details of themselves, will be sent any information they require. What have you to lose? Box 7965.

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SENSITIVE MALE, divorced, educated, likes walking, wholefoods, activity, exploring countryside, based S. Yorks, wishes to meet attractive, caring female, any area, 30-40. Box 7966.

SEVENOAKS: BORED, early retired, half married, presentable surveyor, seeks mid-week golf or indoor games/coffee meetings/country car drives. Box 7959.

SINGLE MOTHER, 36, academic job, seeks solvent and helpful man, who is interested in the countryside, reading. London/Sussex. Box 7949.

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WARM, GENTLE, attractive woman, late 30s, divorced, interested arts, travel and domestic life, intelligent, seeks like-minded male, for lasting relationship. Box 7967.

WIDOWER, 67, professional, 5'9", agnostic, pacifist, naturist, own home Kent coast, car, no ties, seeks sympathetic lady to share holiday/life. Photo appreciated. Box 7943.

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